PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

The plant issue

CHOOSING AND GROWING
Itoh peonies

'Colour makes people feel alive'
The Oxfordshire garden of designer James Alexander-Sinclair

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Editor's letter

The colour in my own garden has never felt so intense. The light is different – I am different – and the garden feels full in every sense. A small garden in the heart of the city, I feel as immersed as Rousseau's tiger in a tropical storm when I sit outside to eat lunch.

'Colour makes people feel alive,' garden designer James Alexander-Sinclair told writer Kendra Wilson when she visited Green Rise, James's Oxfordshire garden, for this issue of *Gardens Illustrated*. Vibrant opium poppies in jam-red, amethyst and plum are a permanent fixture along with superior forms of other wildflowers; the poppies have been grown from seed originally given to James by a young Dan Pearson. In the garden they grow alongside new and unusual plants from Britain's best nurseries. Like many designers, in the luxury of his own garden, James allows his design and planting ideas to slowly unfold and Green Rise is constantly evolving.

Noted for its bold and exuberant flower garden, that is experimental in colour, form and combination, Great Dixter in East Sussex is also deeply in tune with nature. Over the past ten years head gardener Fergus Garrett has taken an organic approach there. Great Dixter includes woodland pasture and woodland edge, meadow, ponds and hedgerows, yet recent research by archaeologists, naturalists, ecologists, botanists and entomologists into everything from bees to ants, hoverflies to spiders and mosses to lichens has found the ornamental flower gardens to be the most richly biodiverse.

'It has made everyday life more interesting and meaningful for all of us at Great Dixter,' Fergus writes on page 46, 'deepening the connection between us and the microcosm of life we share the garden with'. The prevalence of wildlife in actively gardened, beautiful spaces is an exciting prospect for all gardeners. "We don't all have to have water or log piles," Fergus explained when I visited, "most important is that everyone's garden can play a part."

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

At Great Dixter a biodiversity audit has found wildlife in unexpected places, page 46.

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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- Save 10 per cent on two stunning *Agapanthus* collections from Woottens of Wenhaston† – page 109

† Reader offer available to UK readers only.

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Contributors

Jonny Bruce
Jonny visits Olivier and Clara Filippis' dry, Mediterranean garden, page 78. *"An inspiring garden where the Filippis' passion for Mediterranean flora is felt in every inch of its dense plantings."*

Annaïck Guitteny
Annaïck photographs designer Alison Jenkins' garden, page 38. *"It was a privilege to photograph Alison's garden; her passion and knowledge of plants shine through in a breathtaking setting."*

Alys Fowler
Alys falls for Itoh peonies, page 66. *"Peonies are heady, sensual blooms, well worth investing in whether towering tree peonies or the collectable Itohs, and Primrose Hall has them all."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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Standard subscription rates: UK £64.87 per annum; Eire and Europe £74.87 for 13 issues; rest of the world £79.87 for 13 issues. Distribution Frontline, Peterborough. US distribution Source IPD/Speedimpex. Email intlquery@seymour.co.uk Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. *Gardens Illustrated* (ISSN 0968-8920) (USPS 015-608) is published 13 times a year (monthly with a Special issue in July) by Immediate Media Company Bristol, Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol BS1 4ST, UK. Distributed in the USA by NPS Media Group, 2 Corporate Drive, Ste. 945, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodical postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Gardens Illustrated*, PO Box 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495. Unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or transparencies are accepted on the understanding that the publishers incur no liability for their storage or return. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. The *Gardens Illustrated* cover is printed on 250gsm Respecta Gloss produced in Belgium by Burgo; the china clay filler is supplied from the UK. The Immediate Media Company Limited is working to ensure that all of its paper is sourced from well-managed forests. This magazine can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of it at your local collection point. All prices are correct at time of going to press.

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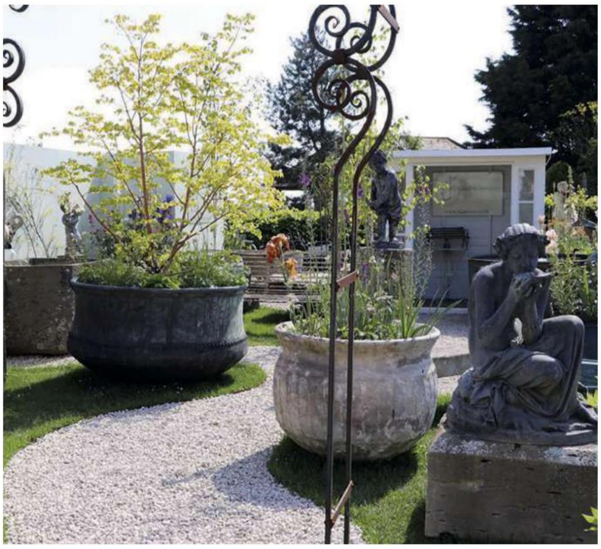

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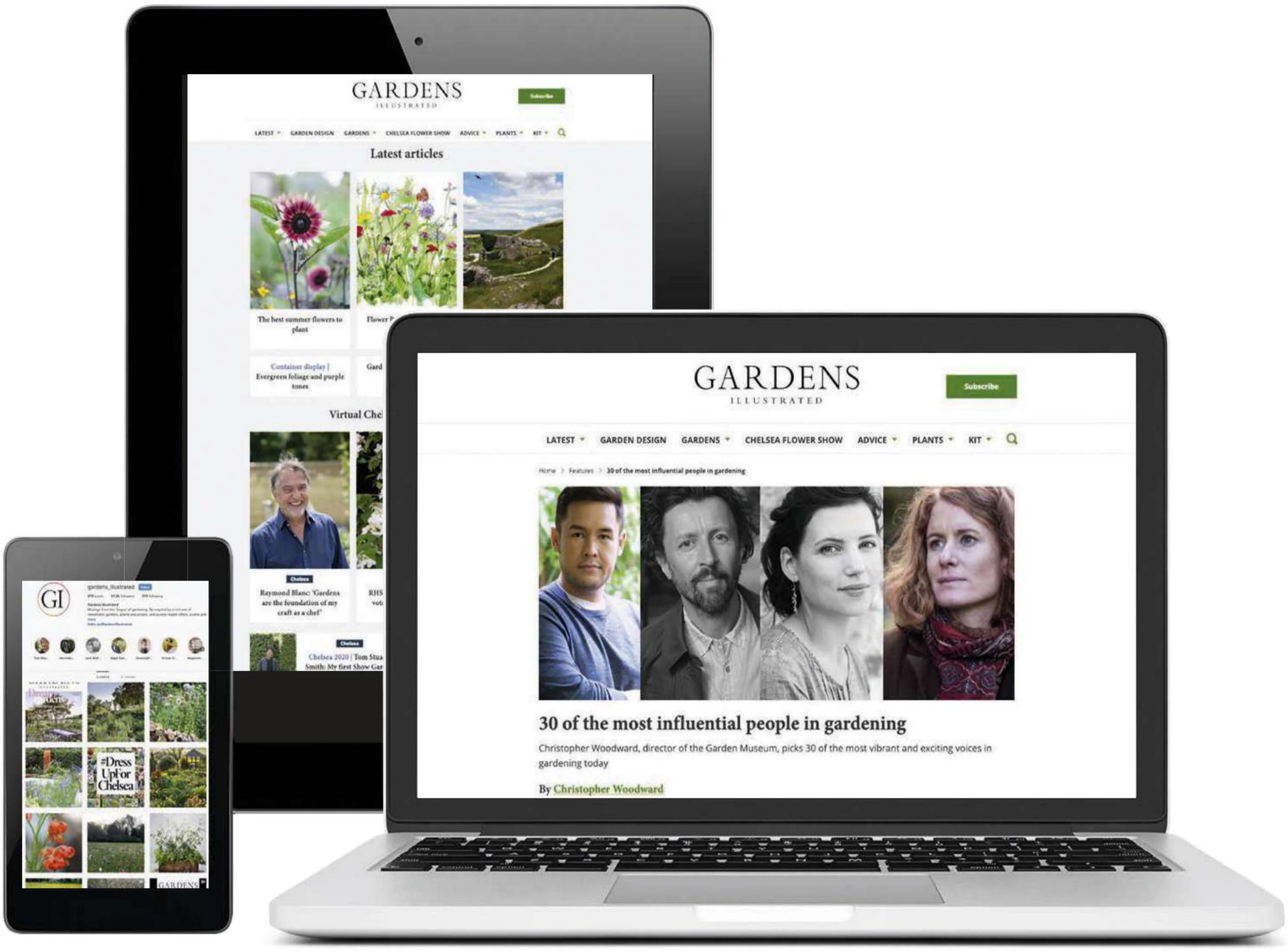
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30 of the most influential people in gardening

Christopher Woodward, director of the Garden Museum, picks 30 of the most vibrant and exciting voices in gardening today

By Christopher Woodward

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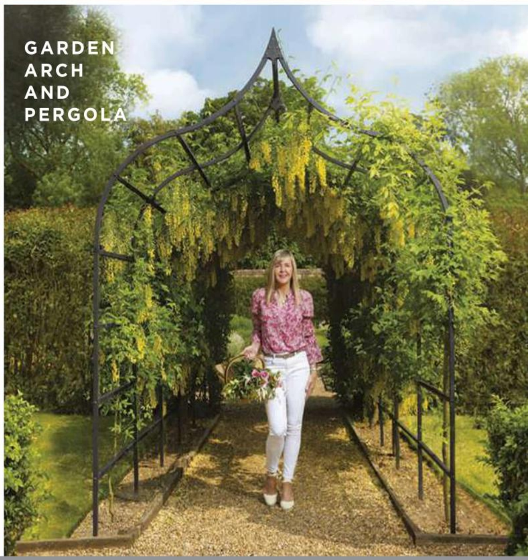

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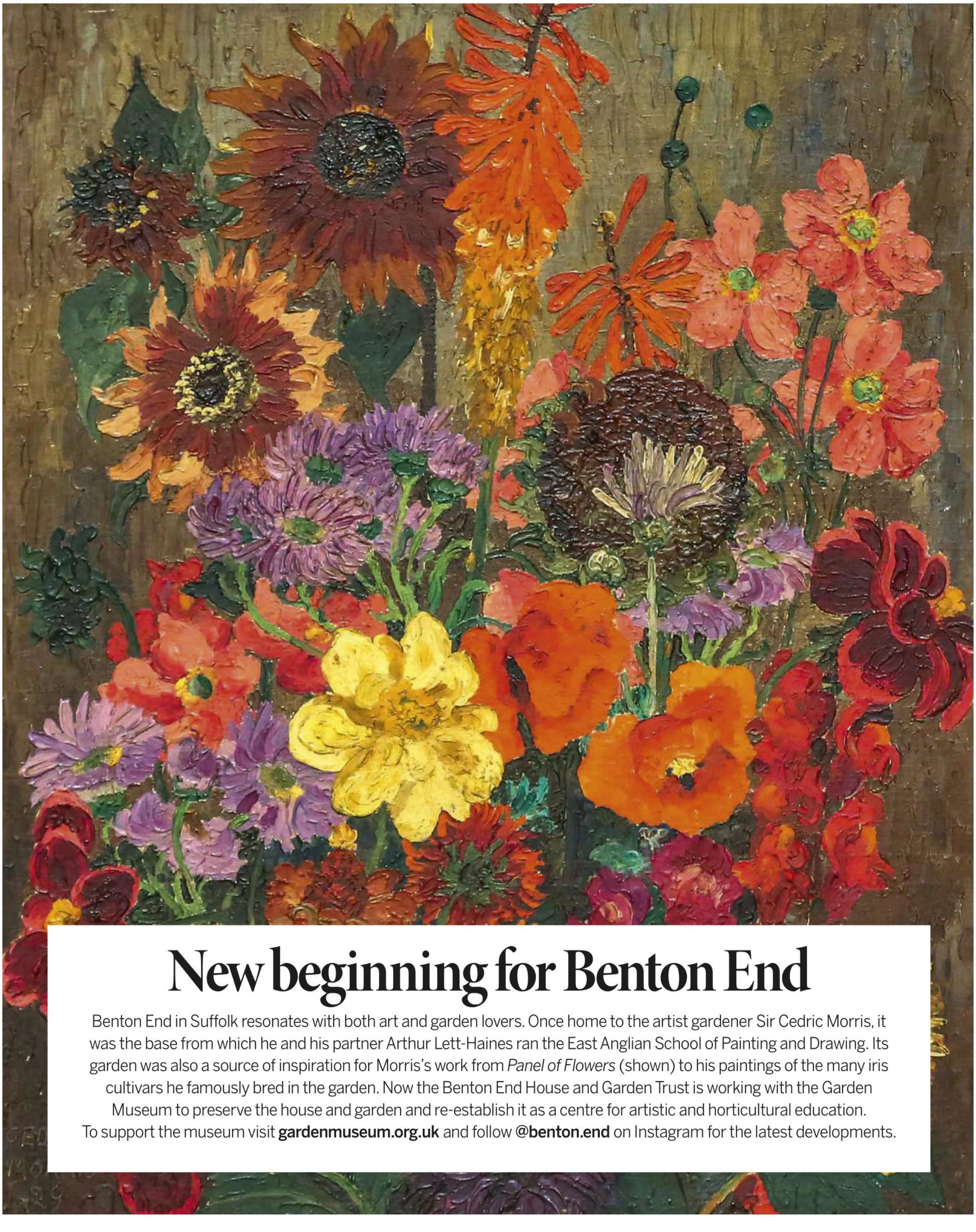
Dig in

What's happening, what's in flower and what to buy this month



DINENDRA HARIA/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

New beginning for Benton End

Benton End in Suffolk resonates with both art and garden lovers. Once home to the artist gardener Sir Cedric Morris, it was the base from which he and his partner Arthur Lett-Haines ran the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing. Its garden was also a source of inspiration for Morris's work from *Panel of Flowers* (shown) to his paintings of the many iris cultivars he famously bred in the garden. Now the Benton End House and Garden Trust is working with the Garden Museum to preserve the house and garden and re-establish it as a centre for artistic and horticultural education. To support the museum visit **gardenmuseum.org.uk** and follow **@benton.end** on Instagram for the latest developments.

News

COMPILED BY DAISY BOWIE-SELL

Style and function

Who says work wear can't be stylish? A new range of work wear from Niwaki, includes this Kojima Work Jacket. Handmade from selvedge denim in Kojima, the famous hub of Japanese denim, the jacket is loose fitting with double-lined pockets and sleeves designed to be rolled up. Perfect for garden work. Prices from £259.
niwaki.com

Design on your doorstep

A new initiative, developed in collaboration with garden designer Jo Thompson, is set to transform the colour of people's gardens. Colour My Garden is a subscription service that offers a year-round bulb design and supply scheme. Available in four pricing plans, depending on your size of garden, the scheme offers a selection of flower bulbs and tubers throughout the year that can be used to create colourful container displays or to add pops of colour among perennial planting. The deliveries arrive at the right time for planting and come with tips and guidance. For more information visit **colourmygarden.co.uk**

BUILD YOUR OWN BEE HOME

Even if you're not able to create a grand design for your own home, you can now help solitary bees to live in style. Created by Space10, IKEA's design studio, Bee Home is a free, open-source, online design programme that has been created in collaboration with design studio Bakken & Bæck and industrial designer Tanita Klein. An easy-to-use website lets you choose the size and style and how you want to position your bee home, then once you're happy with your design, you can download the plans to make at home. The Bee Homes are modular and their levels are locked together without the need for glue, inspired by Japanese wood joinery. The homes are designed specifically for solitary bees, which are prolific pollinators: one solitary bee can provide as much pollination as 120 honeybees combined. To find out more and start designing your own bee home head to **beehome.design**

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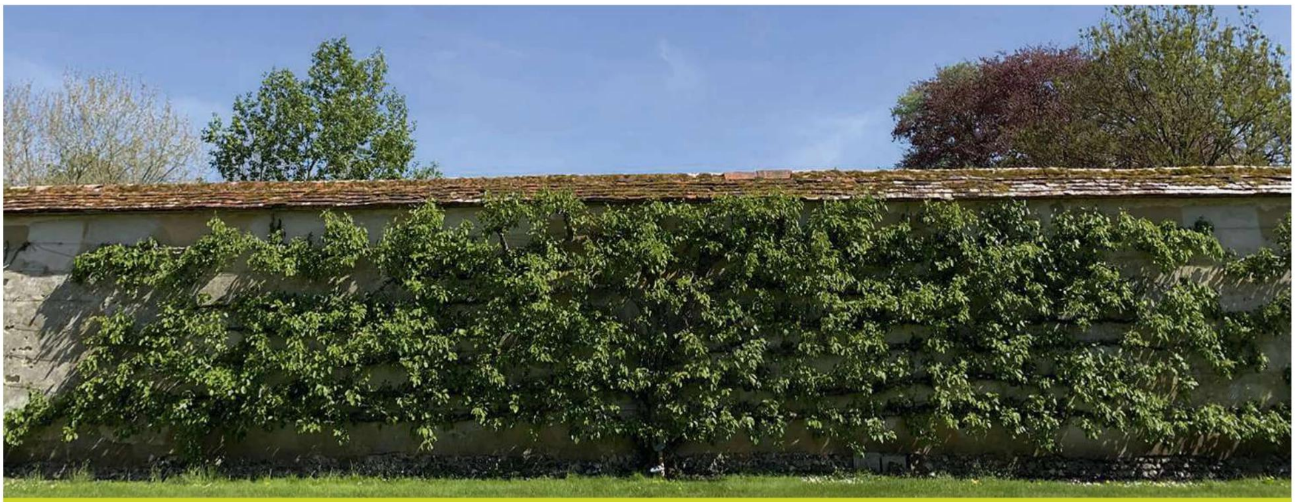


A CHAMPION PEAR

The widest pear tree in Britain has been recorded at Houghton Lodge Gardens in Hampshire. Houghton's kitchen garden has a selection of historic apple and pear trees, many of which were grown more than 100 years ago. One of the trees, *a Pyrus communis* 'Beurré Diel' espalier, spans the west-facing wall and is a whopping 16.33m wide. The gardeners at Houghton always knew it was special, but now it's been recognised by the Champion Tree Register as the widest of its species in Britain. The Champion Tree Register has also recognised the garden's *Acer cappadocicum* 'Aureum' as the new Hampshire County Champion for height and girth. **houghtonlodge.co.uk**

Tiny Tiggy-Winkles

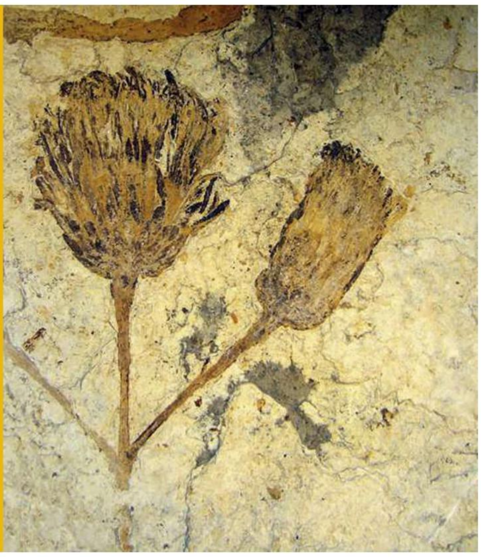
Experts are hoping for a boom in hedgehog numbers this summer following an increase in reports of spring sightings. Hedgehogs' six-week gestation period means that you could be spotting a lot more hoglets over June and July this year. Encourage hedgehogs in your garden by putting a small gap in the fence, which will allow them to get in and out of your garden more easily.

In the bag

Experts have picked out the Vegebag, made by Vegepod UK, as this year's RHS Chelsea Garden Product of the Year. Perfect for small spaces, the pot comes with its own enviro-mesh protective barrier to keep pests and animals at bay while still allowing you easily to water crops. Available in two sizes, the pots are collapsible for easy storage. Prices start at £19.99. ***vegepod.co.uk***

History lessons

A new book, *A History of Plants in 50 Fossils,* published by the Natural History Museum, offers a fascinating insight into the evolution of many familiar plants. Palaeobotanist Paul Kenrick explains each fossil, ranging from petrified tree trunks to grains of pollen and including one of the oldest-known members of Asteraceae or daisy family (right), thought to have originated in South America about 70 million years ago. **nhbs.com**



Thank you, Sylvia

Sylvia left a gift in her Will to help conquer Stroke

The first we knew of Sylvia was when we received notification of the gift she'd left us in her Will. Shortly after, a beautiful story of a much-loved woman began to unfurl.

Friends remembered Sylvia's kind-heart and her wish to help others. She spent part of her adult-life caring for her mother, and developed a passion for medicine. Becoming a medical secretary was her next step and, in the course of her career, she discovered the devastating impact a stroke could have on people and their families. She saw that research and treatment were vastly under-funded, and she decided to remember the Stroke Association in her Will.

Sylvia's gift has helped fund our work to conquer stroke. She's supported research to prevent and treat stroke, and she's helped care for survivors. And that's something you can do too – in the same way.

If you would like to learn more about remembering the Stroke Association in your Will, please get in touch.

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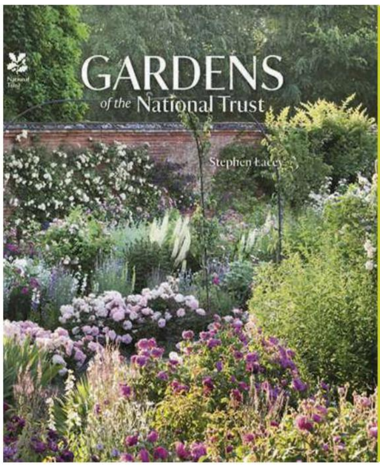
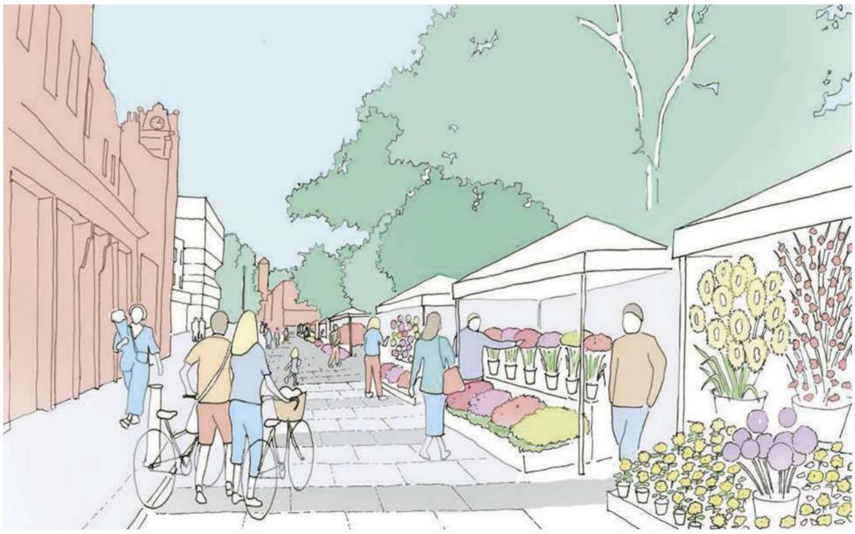


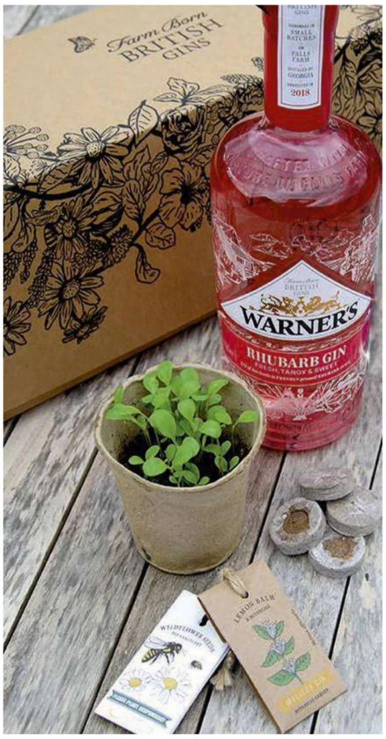
Return of a national treasure

The National Trust's online shop has just re-opened, offering a selection of the Trust's carefully sourced goods, including sustainable living products and gardening tools. But the most popular item after it went live once again? The *Gardens of the National Trust* book. In it Stephen Lacey focuses on horticultural and historical stories of some of the finest gardens in the country. Priced £20. **shop.nationaltrust.org.uk**

East meets west

Plans are afoot for a version of east London's famous Columbia Road flower market for Chiswick in west London. A community interest company has been set up to run the new market on a not-for-profit basis and the council is signed up as a partner. The market, which will be held on the first Sunday of every month and will offer a range of flowers and plants, was due to open in May, but is now likely to open nearer to September. **chiswickflowermarket.com**

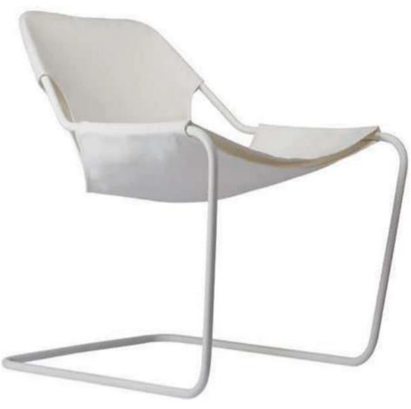




Gin and tonic

Warner Gin is sending out Get Growing Kits with home deliveries. The garden kits include coir compost pellets, biodegradeable pots and wildflower and lemon balm seed packets – perfect for making Warner's Lemon Balm Smash cocktail. The kits come free with every home delivery of its gin and tonic bundle collection, and with every order of two or more 70cl bottles of gin. ***warnersdistillery.com***

3 FOR THE GARDEN… *CLASSIC GARDEN CHAIRS*



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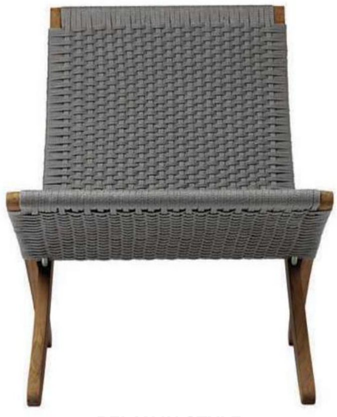

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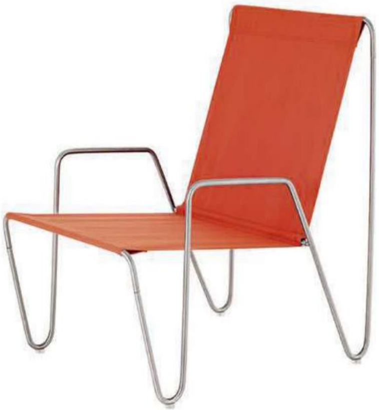

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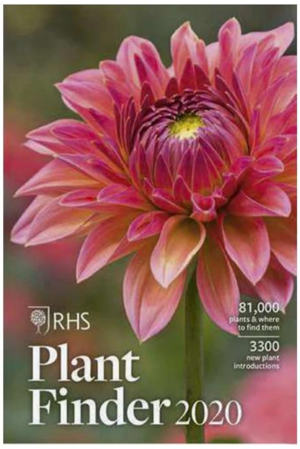

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The Oxfordshire garden of designer James Alexander-Sinclair
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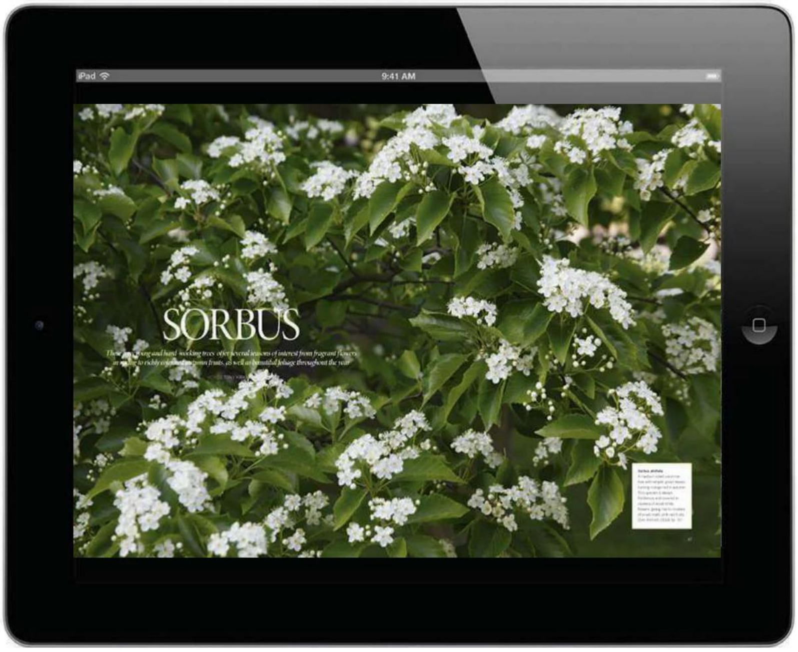
9 stylish outdoor foldaway tables

Full of life
Head gardener Fergus Garrett always knew the gardens at Great Dixter were more biodiverse than many ecologists might think, but even he was surprised to find out how much wildlife they supported
We hadn't gardened specifically for biodiversity – it was just here as a by-product

Natural beauty
In her own garden, designer Alison Jenkins has used a sophisticated palette of colourful planting that sits lightly in its Somerset setting
IN BRIEF



A must-have read for passionate gardeners, *Gardens Illustrated* magazine provides a unique insight into the world's most beautiful gardens, expert advice and planting ideas.

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SUMMER HOLIDAY

Time to take a break from making endless lists of garden jobs and take a summer tour of your garden, with notebook and pencil in hand, to discover what's working well and what's not, and what lessons you can learn for next year's crops

WORDS **AARON BERTELSEN**
ILLUSTRATION **ALICE PATTULLO**

SOIL →
COMPOST
MANURE
LEAFMOULD
↓ 7.5cm
WATER
→ SAVE RAINWATER!
Move sprinkler
Favourites?
1
2
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4
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VEG PLOT
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For this early summer issue of the magazine, I have decided to take a break from issuing endless lists of instructions and reminding you of all the things you have forgotten to do. Instead, I am encouraging you to put down the hoe and the secateurs, set your trowel to one side and instead head out into the garden with the most important tools of all – a notebook and pencil.

The height of summer is a busy time in the vegetable garden, but it is also an excellent time to take stock and look at what is working and what isn't. Identify the problem areas now, and you will have plenty of time during the autumn and winter to sort them out before the next growing season. Take photos, make notes, and if you can, invite an opinionated and curious friend. It is always helpful to have a fresh perspective. Of course, this is a purely subjective exercise, but here are a few of my own thoughts to get you started.

I spend more and more time these days thinking about my soil. It is all very well telling people they should eat a certain amount of fruit and vegetables every day, but what is the point if there is no goodness in them? Flavoursome, nutritious produce comes from a soil that is well structured and teeming with beneficial bacteria, insects and fungi, and that means adding plenty of organic matter in the form of compost, manure or leaf mould. I like to dig it in, finding that this is the most effective way to improve the structure of our heavy clay; others prefer not to dig. Either way, the key is to do it regularly, and to be generous. I would think in terms of a good 7.5cm layer.

Next up, water. Do your plants look strong and healthy, or are they wilting and weak? There are many reasons why plants fail to thrive, of course, but perhaps the most common – and probably the most commonly overlooked – is failing to water properly. There are no short cuts, but there are ways of making life easier for yourself. Is there a tap within easy reach? Do you have a decent hose that's long enough to reach all parts of the garden? Is your sprinkler in working order? Could you be doing more to save rainwater, or make use of waste water from the house (especially useful if you are growing in pots outside the kitchen door)? I make no apologies if these points sound obvious. They are worth reiterating. It is very easy to go on making life unnecessarily difficult for yourself when only a very small investment could make a big difference. The other key thing with watering is routine. I have already explained how I water – each area gets an hour's solid watering, once a week. I have a schedule, and I stick to it.

It is very easy to go on making life unnecessarily difficult for yourself when only a very small investment could make a big difference

Assuming that space permits, are you making good enough use of garden waste? Home-made compost is an excellent means of improving the soil and makes a lot more sense economically and environmentally than buying material in or transporting it from elsewhere. Leaf mould too is a wonderful addition to the soil, and not made nearly as much as it should be in my view. I am hoping that will change – what could make more sense than gathering up what would normally be seen as a waste product and turning it into a useful resource, especially when there is so little effort involved? Just pack the leaves into a 'bin' made from chicken wire or a sturdy bag with holes pinched in it – a bin liner will do – and leave it for a couple of years until you have a rich, brown, crumbly mix.

This is also an excellent time to assess how well the layout of your growing space is working for you – and your crops. That means looking at where things are growing – are they getting enough sunlight? Are they suffering from being exposed to the wind? It also means looking at the bones of your growing area. If you have paths, are they wide enough? Do your borders match the reach of your sprinkler, or are the plants at the edge missing out? In a courtyard or smaller space, are the crops you need most often easily accessible? If you're growing sweet peas alongside your French beans, are they in a spot where you can really enjoy the scent?

Finally, look at what you are actually growing. Does it excite you? Are you making use of it in the kitchen, or leaving it on the plants to go to waste? It is surprisingly easy to dedicate large amounts of time and energy to growing things we don't actually use, perhaps because of some ingrained idea about what a vegetable garden should look like, or what a 'proper' vegetable gardener should do. Your plants will tell you everything you need to know about what you actually use, and what brings you pleasure. Which, after all, is what it's all about.

On that note, I would add one more thing to the list of essential accessories for this little garden tour: a glass of my good friend Jayne's Best in the World mojito. The name may sound like hyperbole – but just wait until you taste it. Sometimes I wonder if there is really any need to grow anything other than mint? □

For Jayne's Best in the World mojito recipe, please go to gardensillustrated.com/recipes

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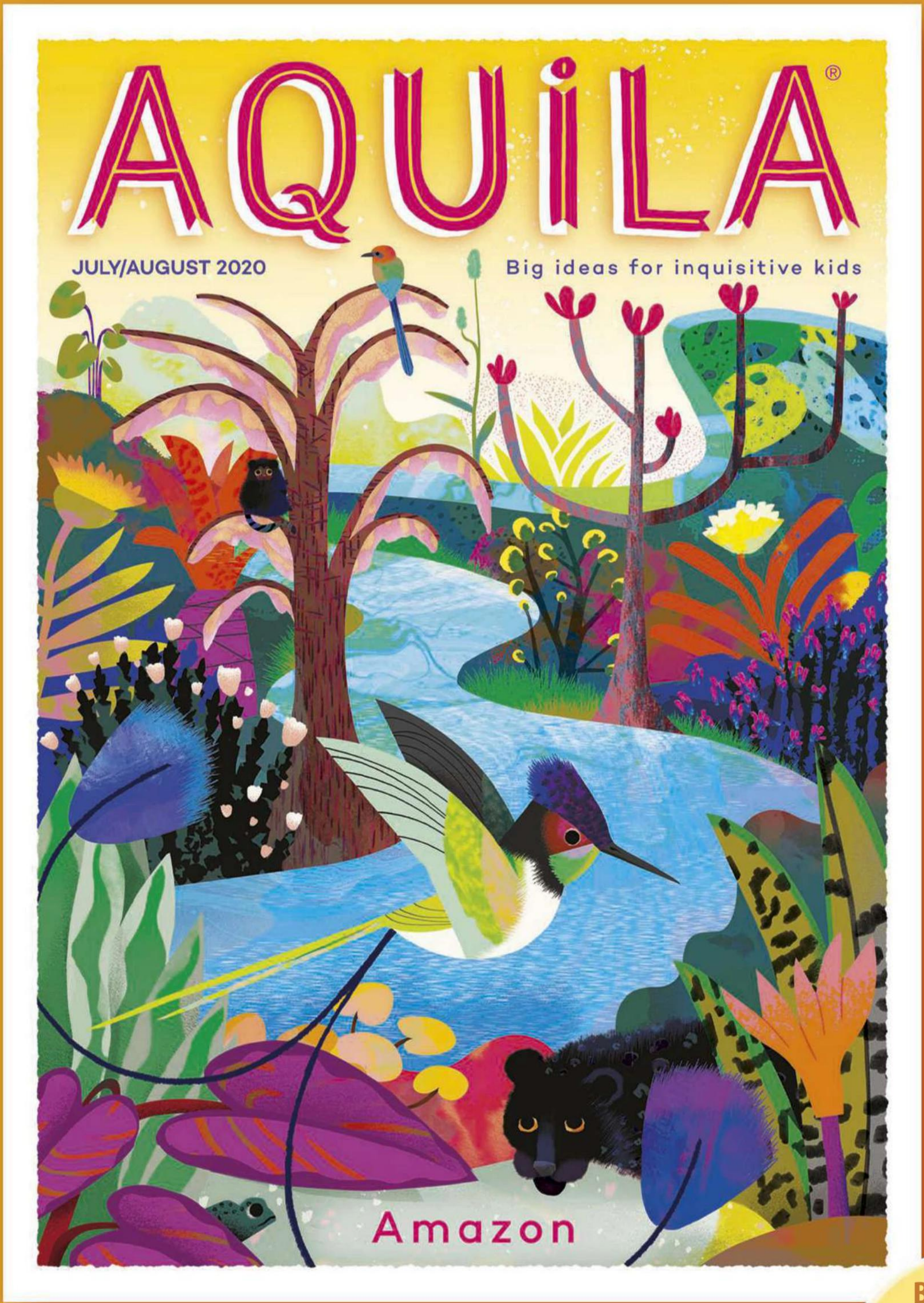

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> There's no substitute for working alongside experienced gardeners

GARDENING TALENT

TOM BREAM

Encouraged by his grandfather to follow a career in horticulture, Tom is now head gardener at a Berkshire estate

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory My parent's allotment was where a healthy interest in worms and mud sowed the seeds for a passion for horticulture. I grew up feeling that being outdoors all year round was the only way to be.

First plant love The oak trees in the woodland near to where I grew up were the perfect natural adventure playground. Building treehouses in them allowed me to develop a real kinship with nature.

Who has inspired your career the most? My grandad on discovering I'd left university to pursue an apprenticeship in horticulture was incredibly supportive and wrote me a letter saying 'I'm sure we'll see you working with Kew or the RHS one day'. I'll always remember the encouragement that this gave me.

Horticultural heroes Roy Lancaster gave a fantastic speech at my RHS Wisley Diploma graduation, which really reinforced the importance of being in touch with the plants around us. He explained how weeding could become a memory exercise for any budding horticulturist if you learn the botanical name of every weed pulled.

Most valuable training It was a privilege to benefit from the diversity of skill and knowledge that RHS Wisley offered as part of the Wisley Diploma in Practical Horticulture. But while my formal training has given me a great basis of knowledge, there's no substitute for working alongside experienced gardeners.

Worthwhile tip Plants die – don't be afraid to try things again if they don't work out the first time.

Dream plant destination I fulfilled a dream of seeing giant and coastal redwoods in California last year and my expectations of their grandeur were greatly surpassed. It's impossible to imagine the difference in scale until they're seen up close.

One easy thing that every gardener can do to be more sustainable in their gardening Question everything. Some things really are only done for the sake of tradition. If you don't use your lawn, do you need it?

Favourite gardening books I'm more likely to get lost in a new catalogue for gardening tools than anything else.

What's the next big project in the garden? The garden where I work is very varied. I'm currently working to naturalise a meadow and large area of bulbs, creating a parkland and planting more trees. A solid day clearing duckweed from our pond is always something to look forward to. It can be disheartening when it seems to regrow as quickly as it is removed but perseverance pays off.

Contact tbream@havishamgroup.com

Slow rise

Designer James Alexander-Sinclair is happy to allow his new Oxfordshire garden to evolve slowly over time

WORDS **KENDRA WILSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER**

IN BRIEF

Name Green Rise.
What Sheltered, private garden of designer James Alexander-Sinclair.
Where Oxfordshire.
Size Half an acre.
Soil Mixture of good, sandy loam and clay.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

A walk around Green Rise leads to the surprise of an elegant pond, hidden away behind the arc of a mound and surrounded with jungly planting. Large stones were salvaged from Cleve West's 2016 RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden, one of them making a contemplative seat that faces towards the afternoon sun.

Perched on a grassy knoll in an Oxfordshire hamlet, the home of garden designer James Alexander-Sinclair is known as Green Rise. In name and style it is the opposite of Blackpitts, which readers of his blogs and other writings will remember as his former family home in Northamptonshire. Slightly further south, Green Rise is a more traditional house and garden, with no plant life transferred from Blackpitts at all, except for some poppy seeds.

Opium poppies, in shades of amethyst and plum, are one link with Blackpitts, and so it seems, is rubble. Having dealt with a surplus of concrete in the old garden, a grass-covered bank of builder's rubble from the 1970s greeted the Alexander-Sinclairs at Green Rise: "So we continued that tradition and put all our rubbish in as well," notes James. A broader take on gravel gardening, rubble gardening might not be to everyone's taste but plants seem to like it, appreciating the drainage. In joining two piles of rough ground together across the lawn, James has created a graceful arc that prevents the whole garden from being given away. "This is the surprise; you come round the corner and boof-boof, there's the pond."

Around a quiet piece of water, a jungle of *Tetrapanax papyrifer*, Sichuan pepper (*Zanthoxylum simulans*) and persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*) jostle among rare cultivars of garden regulars. Overlooked by a couple of big-leaved *Paulownia* trees, it is like a dream of a pond, in an English rainforest. A sense of grandeur is due in part to some well-placed rocks that once adorned Cleve West's show garden at the 2016 RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Sheltered from the house, and facing south, an oblong stone is just the place to perch at water's edge: "Because sitting and looking at fish is something that appeals to one more and more as one gets older," says James.

James is a free-thinking designer and lively communicator, with a sense of fun that audiences appreciate on his many speaking engagements. It follows then that his kind of plants have a certain pizzazz. "Tastefulness is fine but you can be tasteful at the same time as being zingy," he says. "Colour makes people feel alive; they are sometimes scared of that sort of thing and they shouldn't be." He is also attracted to unusual plants, which he mixes up with superior versions of common wildflowers such as *Digitalis lutea* or selected *Centranthus lecoqii*. "The way to find good plants is to go to nurseries and say, 'Show me ▷

Looking "slightly alien yet completely at home" a large rusted ball from Capital Garden Products covers a patch of ground that is matted with the roots of some old birch trees. On the edge of the kitchen garden, a site-specific Hartley Botanic glasshouse was made using local stone.

We're putting things in slowly over the years. A garden should be happy and not over thought, and slightly instinctive

▷ something I've never seen before'," he explains. The renowned plantswoman Marina Christopher has bred many favourites by the pond. "If it's good enough for Marina," he says, "it's good enough for me."

On looking for a new place to live, the Alexander-Sinclairs' hoped to find a stream, a wood and a view of the sunset. They did get some trees, too many laurels and a loitering clump of leylandii. Offending shrubs and trees have been thinned out or excised, a laurel bed on the boundary being replaced slowly with more interesting evergreens, such as *Podocarpus salignus, Osmanthus yunnanensis*, *Viburnum cinnamomifolium* and *Quercus myrtifolia*. An "annual cascade" luxuriates in a newly created sunny patch at the front of the border, which is courtesy of James's wife Celestria, who focusses on detail while James ponders the wider picture. "Big gestures are done by me and constructive criticism comes from Celestria," he explains. "She is my most observant client."

Hard surfaces have been handled with James's customary light touch. A flight of Corten steel steps near the pond seems to hover like a staircase in a Busby Berkeley musical, while a large metal ball emerges from Celestria's flowers, covering uncongenial tree roots.

"There's no hurry for this garden," says James. It is a salient lesson for those in recent possession of a house with a patch of grass. He and Celestria continually assess and, when something isn't working, reject ideas. They had to make some early decisions when the builders were in: how to get to the front door, how to connect odd bits of paving – but ideas have been allowed to present themselves in their own time. Plants and hard materials have been reduced, reused and recycled. "The design of the garden is evolving; we're putting things in slowly over the years," says James. "A garden should be happy – not over thought but slightly instinctive." □

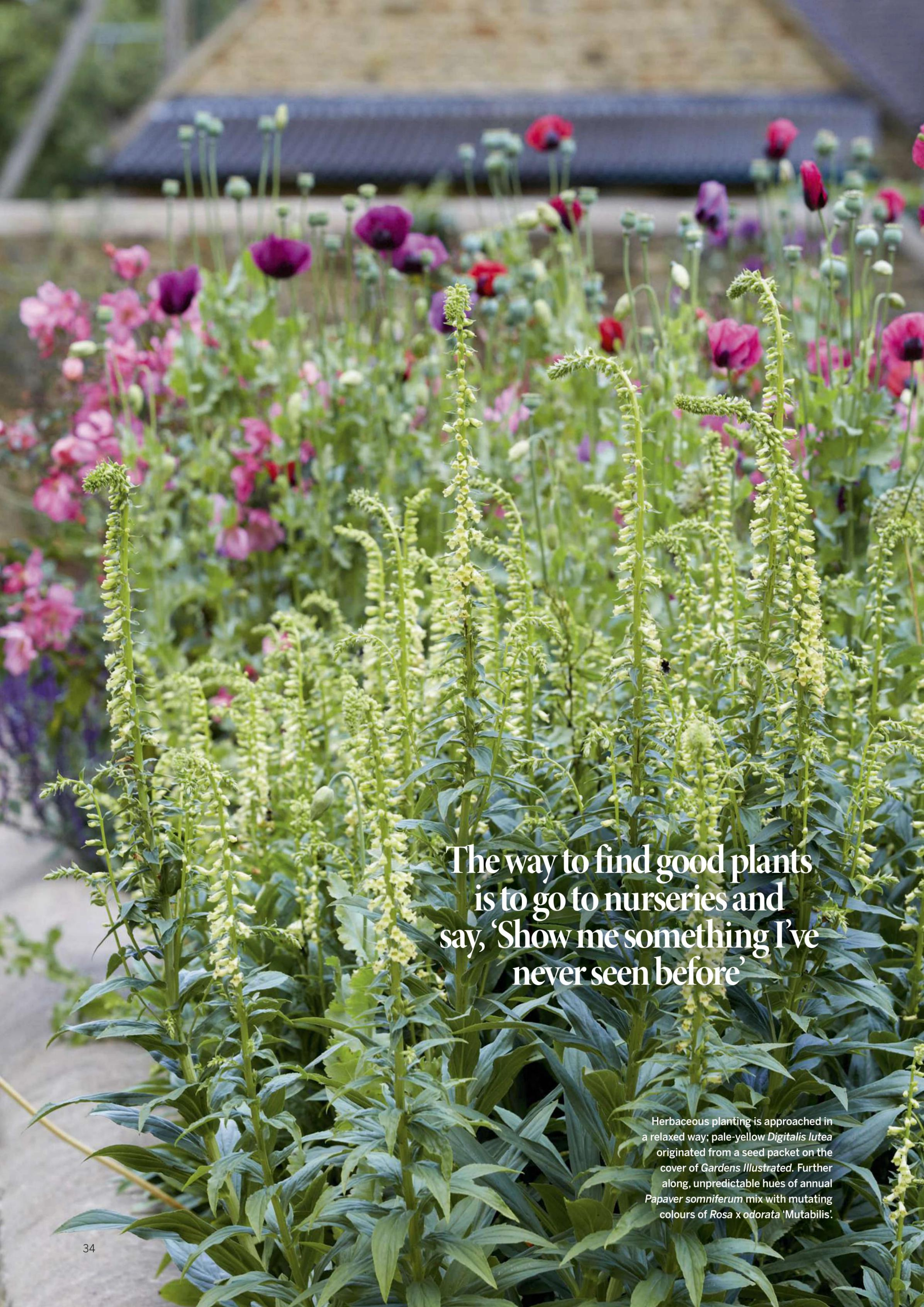
USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about James's work at **jamesalexandersinclair.com**

Turn the page for 24 key plants from Green Rise

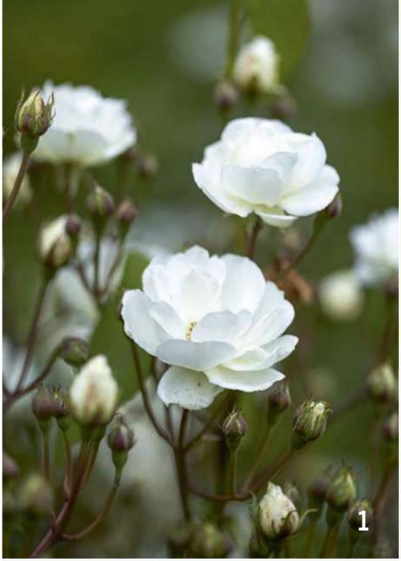
The pink and peach of *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis' adds zing to an already colourful border between the garden and the house. Along the wall by the driveway is a rambling rose, *Rosa* 'Cooperi'.

Big gestures are done by me and constructive criticism comes from Celestria. She is my most observant client



> The way to find good plants is to go to nurseries and say, 'Show me something I've never seen before'

Herbaceous planting is approached in a relaxed way; pale-yellow *Digitalis lutea* originated from a seed packet on the cover of *Gardens Illustrated.* Further along, unpredictable hues of annual *Papaver somniferum* mix with mutating colours of *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis'.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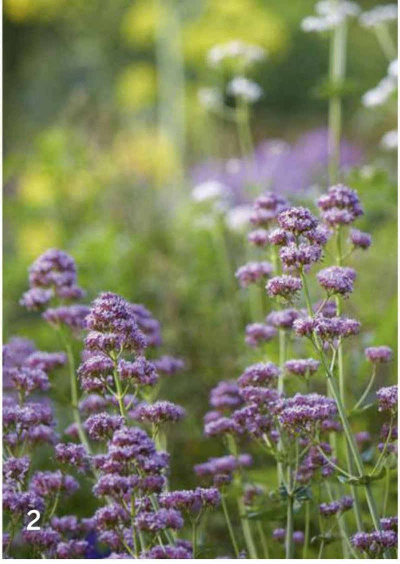
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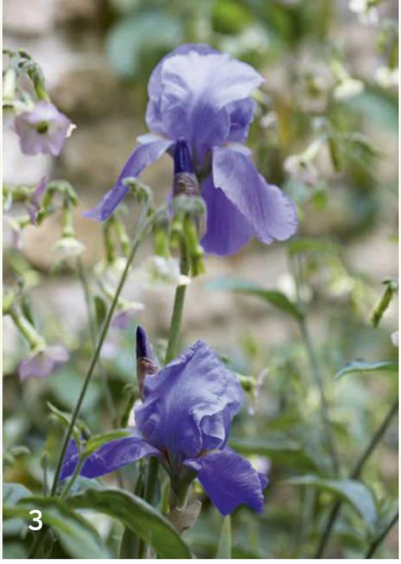
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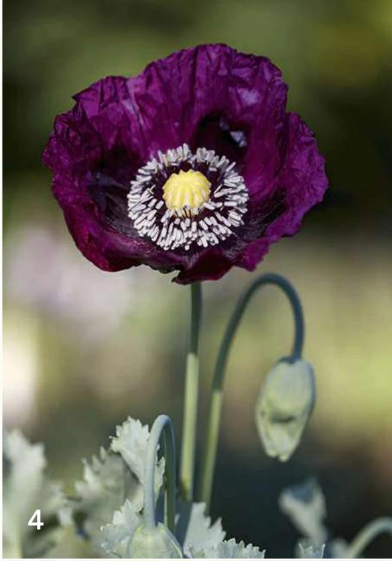
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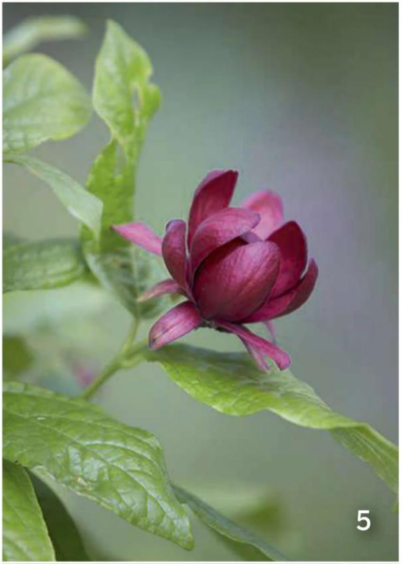
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24 KEY PLANTS

1 ***Rosa* 'Moonlight'** An old, hybrid musk shrub rose that also works well as a climber. Semi-double, creamy flowers are borne on long reddish stems, flowering all summer and into autumn. 1.5m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b†.

2 ***Centranthus lecoqii*** Good variation on common red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), mauve valerian is native to Mediterranean regions and enjoys a home that is sandy and free-draining, in full sun. Clump-forming perennial. 60cm.

3 ***Iris* 'Jane Phillips'** Well-loved, tall, bearded iris of clear blue. Freely flowering with good foliage, rhizomes need to bake in the sun. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7.

4 ***Papaver somniferum*** Plants with the best colours are selected, from seeds originally collected at an early Dan Pearson-designed garden. Easygoing in full sun or semi-shade, these glaucous plants make structural seedheads. Young plants need to be thinned. 1.5m.

5 ***Calycanthus floridus*** Tall, wide and long-flowering, this deciduous shrub bears scented, wine-coloured blooms, 10cm across. Trouble-free but requires shelter. 3m. USDA 4a-9b.

6 ***Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis'** "A rose of which I'm inordinately fond as it just flowers forever," says James. Its colouring is also an attraction: large, single flowers change from peach to deepening shades of pink, offset by purple stems. Lax, almost thornless shrub. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

7 ***Digitalis purpurea*** Useful wildflower that can be directly sown with fresh seed in late spring, after flowering. The true form is magenta but inter-pollination produces a variety of shades through to white. Biennial. 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

8 ***Iris* 'Dark Desire'** Moisture-loving, Siberian flag iris that thrives near a pond, flowering in late spring and early summer. 90cm.

9 ***Melica nutans*** British meadow native grass, tolerating dry shade and wind. An easy groundcover in difficult areas of the garden. Produces arching flowerheads throughout summer. 30cm.

10 ***Ferula communis* 'Gigantea'** Giant fennel, at home on stony ground in the Mediterranean region. Puts on enormous growth by late spring, feathery foliage crowned with lime green-yellow umbels that attract pollinators over a long season. Can take a few years to flower. 3-4m. RHS H3, USDA 4a-8b.

11 ***Magnolia* x *wieseneri*** Planted as a tree in James's lawn to block a view, this hybrid is late-flowering and very fragrant, with cupped white petals and red stamens. Fully hardy but requires shelter from strong winds. 5m. USDA 6a-9b.

12 ***Nicotiana mutabilis*** Delicate-looking annual with billows of single, tubular flowers borne on airy, branching stems. Blooms open white, changing to variations of mauve and pink all on one plant. Native to Brazil, thriving in full sun as well as light shade. 1.5m. RHS H2, USDA 10a-11.

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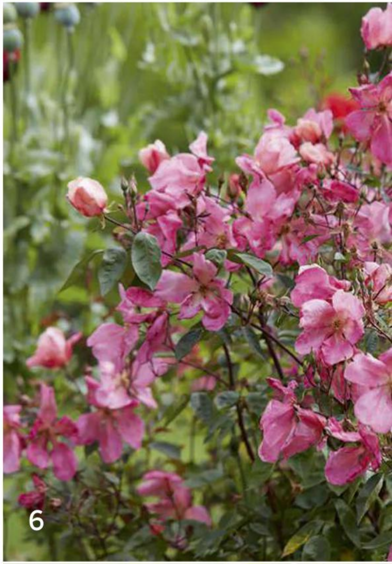
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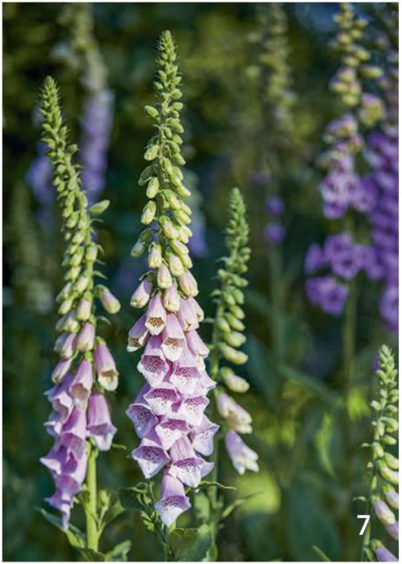
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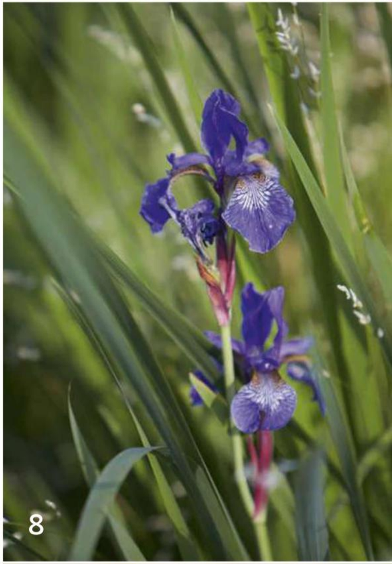
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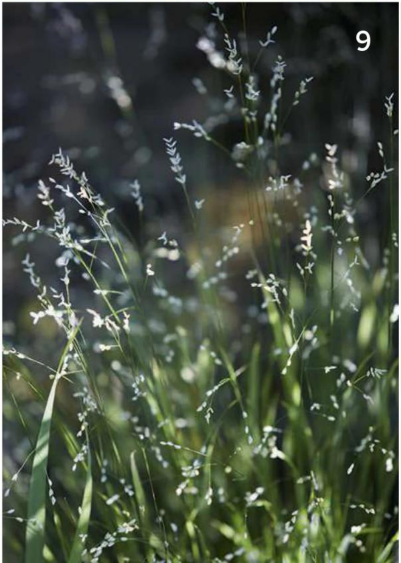
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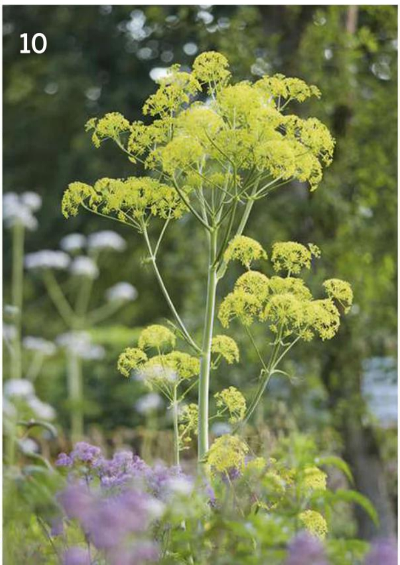
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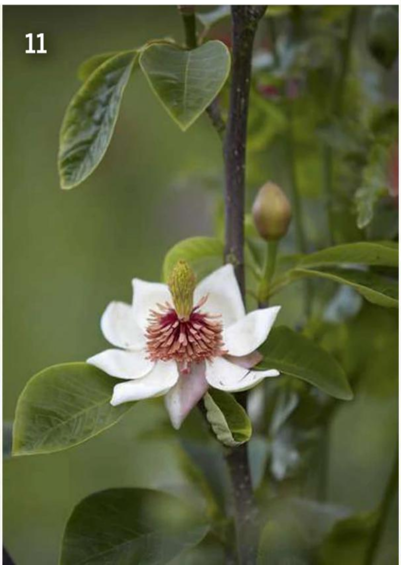
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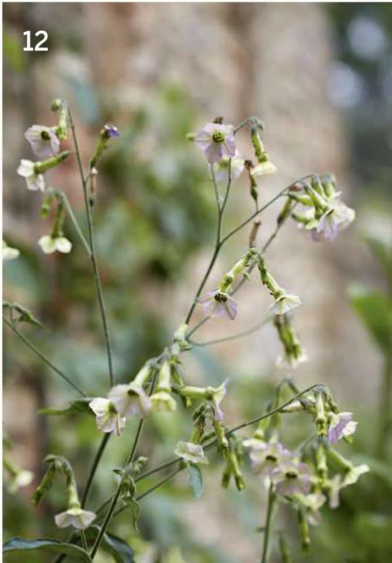
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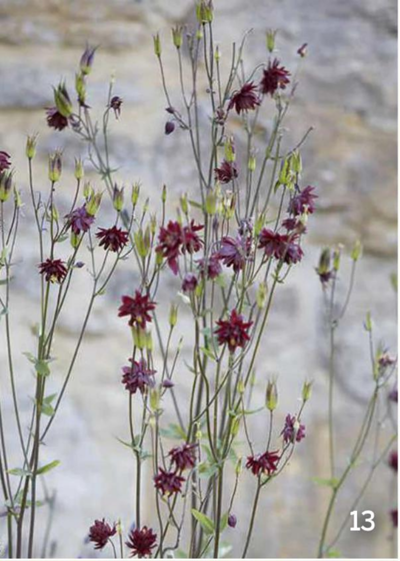
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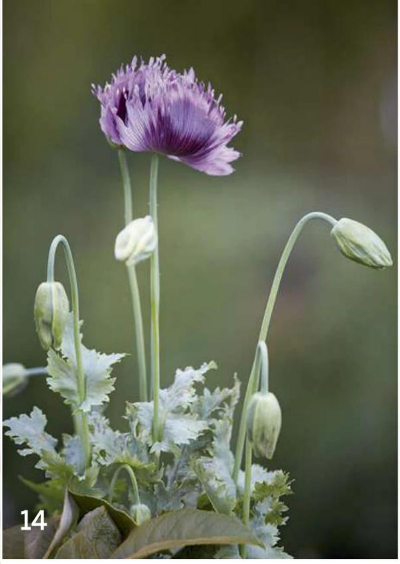
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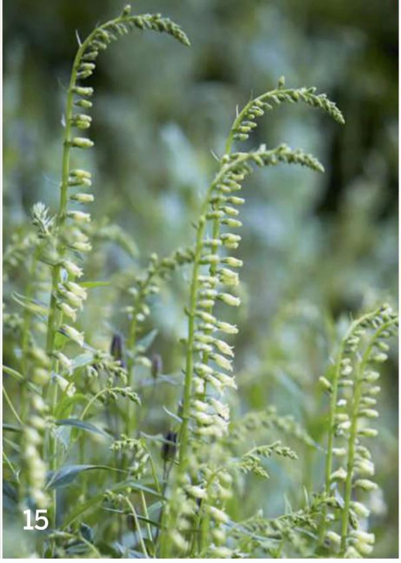
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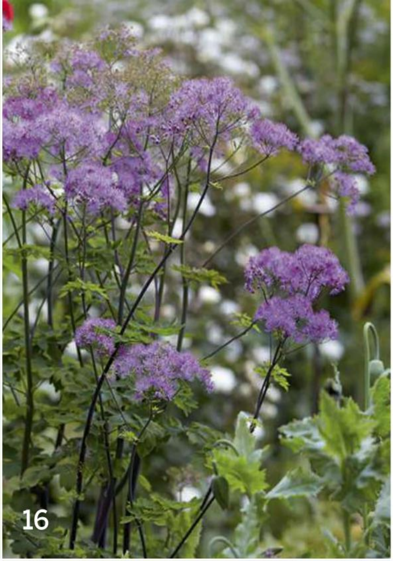
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24 KEY PLANTS CONTINUED

13 ***Aquilegia vulgaris*** **var. *stellata* 'Ruby Port'** A columbine cultivar standing tall on stiff stems with attractively divided foliage. Sulphur-coloured stamens shine out amid dark, nodding, double flowers. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

14 ***Papaver somniferum*** **(naturally mutated)** As opium poppies cross-pollinate they create myriad jewelled colours, with occasional mutations in shape, resulting in serrated edges and/or fully double flowers that are rounded like pompoms. 1m. RHS H5.

15 ***Digitalis lutea*** The leaves reveal that this isn't an ordinary foxglove but something more refined, with small, glowing, tubular flowers of pale yellow. Agreeably versatile, growing in any aspect. 60cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

16 ***Thalictrum*** **'Black Stockings'** Lacy foliage and tall, dark stems make this an attractive plant even before flowering. Small, luminous purple flowers throughout summer. Meadow rue likes moisture and sun or dappled shade. 2m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

17 ***Pisum sativum*** Peas, along with borlotti and French beans, scramble up an iron mesh tunnel. Peas do well in cooler temperatures but they require an open, sunny position. Regular watering is required during flowering, and while the peas are ripening. 1.2m. USDA 2a-11.

18 ***Erigeron karvinskianus*** Useful groundcover for edging or in cracks, a long sequence of small daisy-type flowers open white, turning to shades of pink. These South American plants require full sun and any soil with good drainage. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5.

19 ***Salvia*** **'Royal Bumble'** Searing red petals emerge from dark calyces on purple stems in early summer. Long flowering and hardy. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4.

20 ***Buddleja alternifolia*** Graceful arches of pale mauve flowers distinguish this from the ordinary butterfly bush. It is just as tough, taking any soil and any aspect although it is happier with sun and reasonable drainage. A deciduous shrub that responds well to a hard prune in spring. 3m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

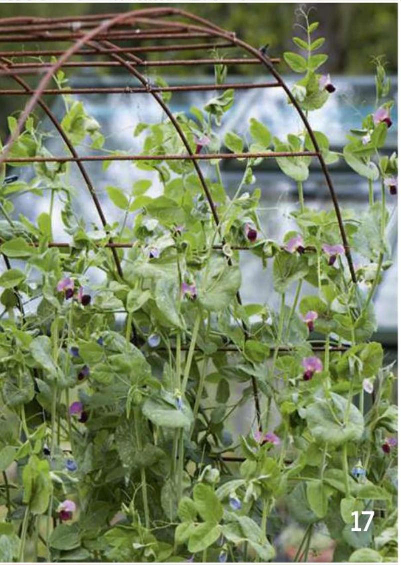
21 ***Philadelphus delavayi*** **f. *melanocalyx* 'Nyman's Variety'** "Seriously wonderful shrub," says James. "Unusual and gorgeous." The limitations of mock orange as a shrub are usually made up for in fragrance but this cultivar ticks both boxes. Highly scented white flowers are held in purple sepals. 3m. AGM. RHS H6.

22 ***Iris*** **'Butterscotch Kiss'** Tall bearded iris from the 1950s, with yellow-orange beard. Requires full sun and well-drained soil. 90cm. RHS H7.

23 ***Salvia nemorosa*** **'Caradonna'** Long-flowering Balkan clary, with vibrant purple flowers on dark stems that attract pollinators from June to October. It will tolerate exposure and some shade. 30-50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

24 ***Sambucu nigra*** **f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva'** Darkest purple stems and foliage contrast with pale buds and pink flowers. Leaves are deeply dissected and benefit from full sun for the richest colour. Dark berries in autumn are nourishing for birds. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

***Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available..**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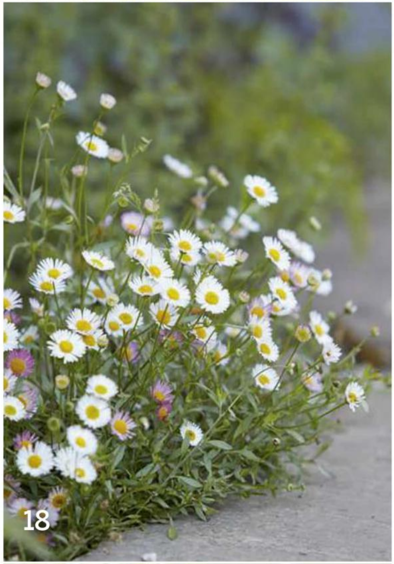
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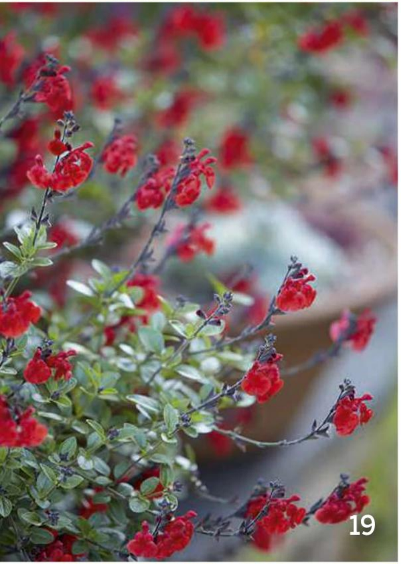
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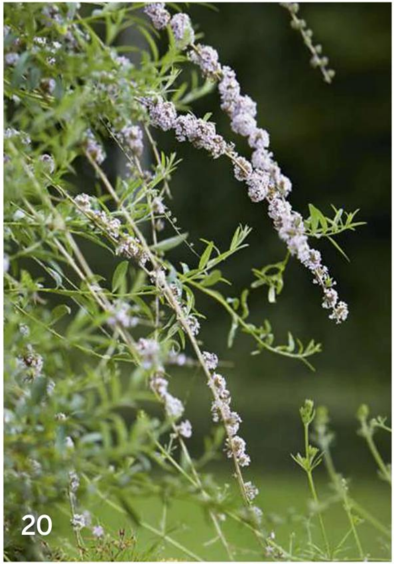
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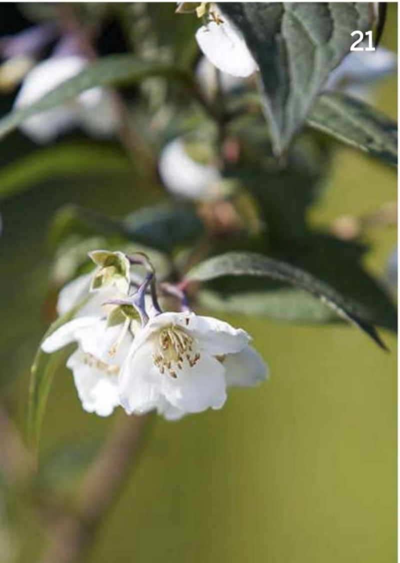
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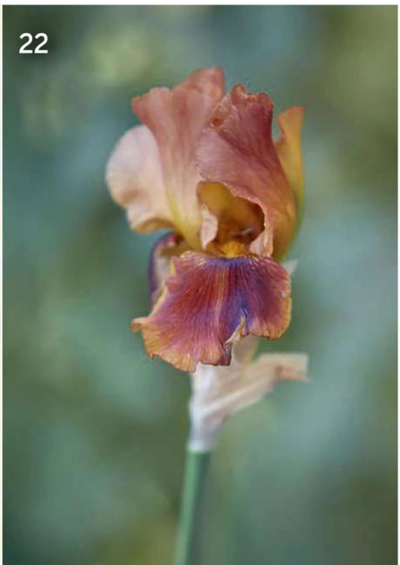
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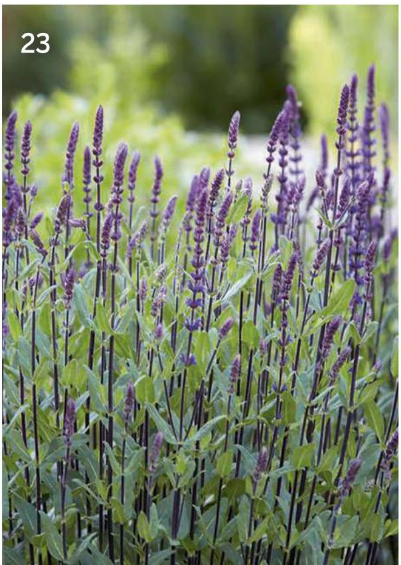
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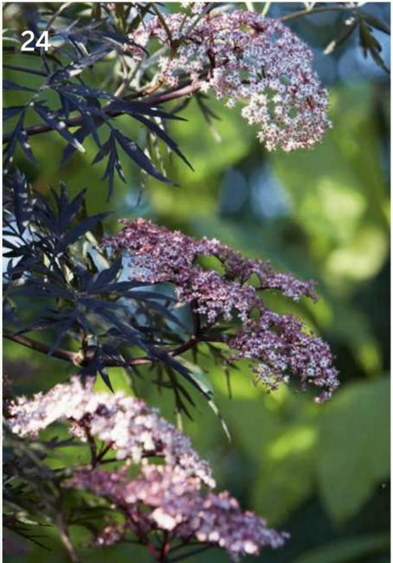
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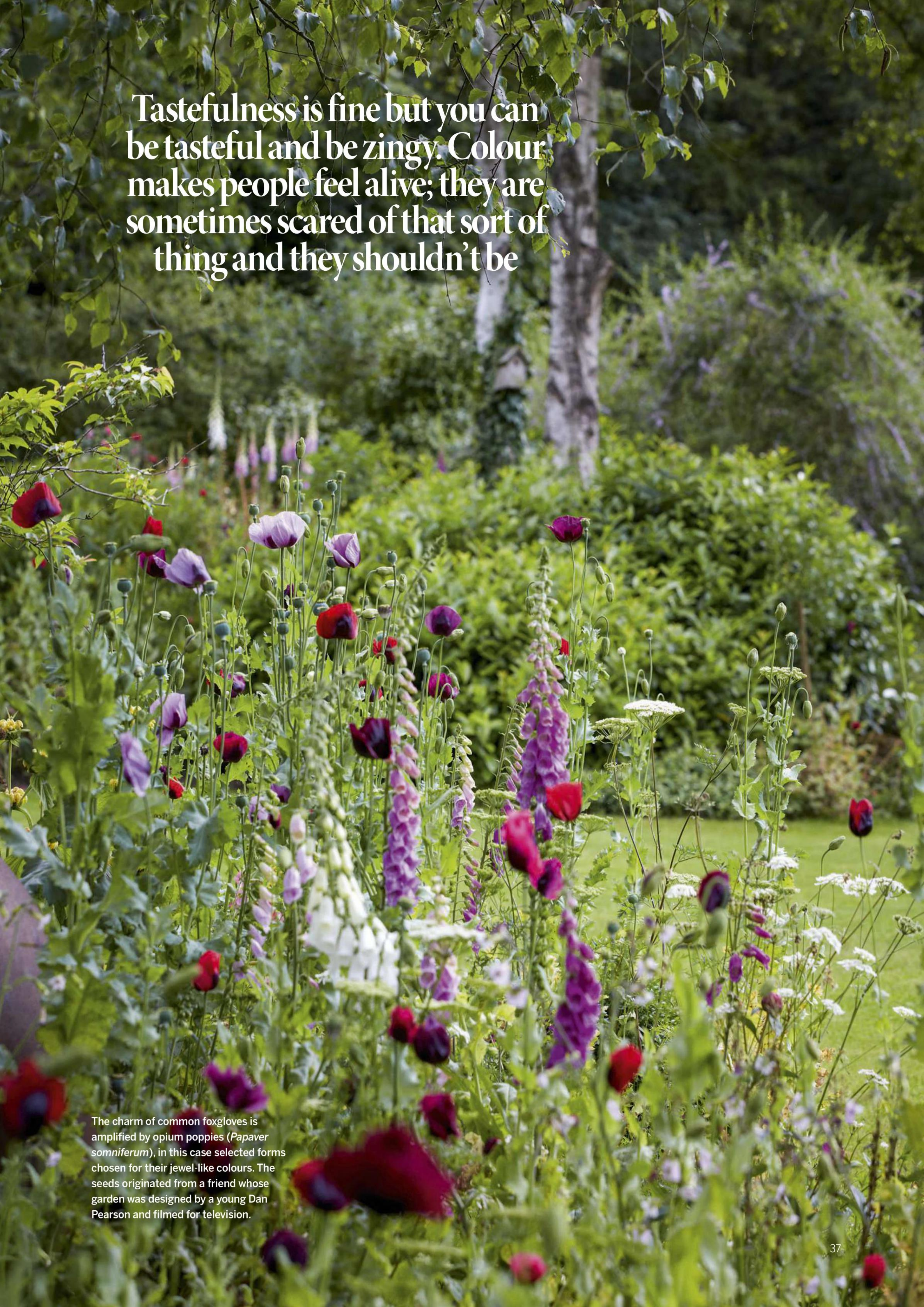
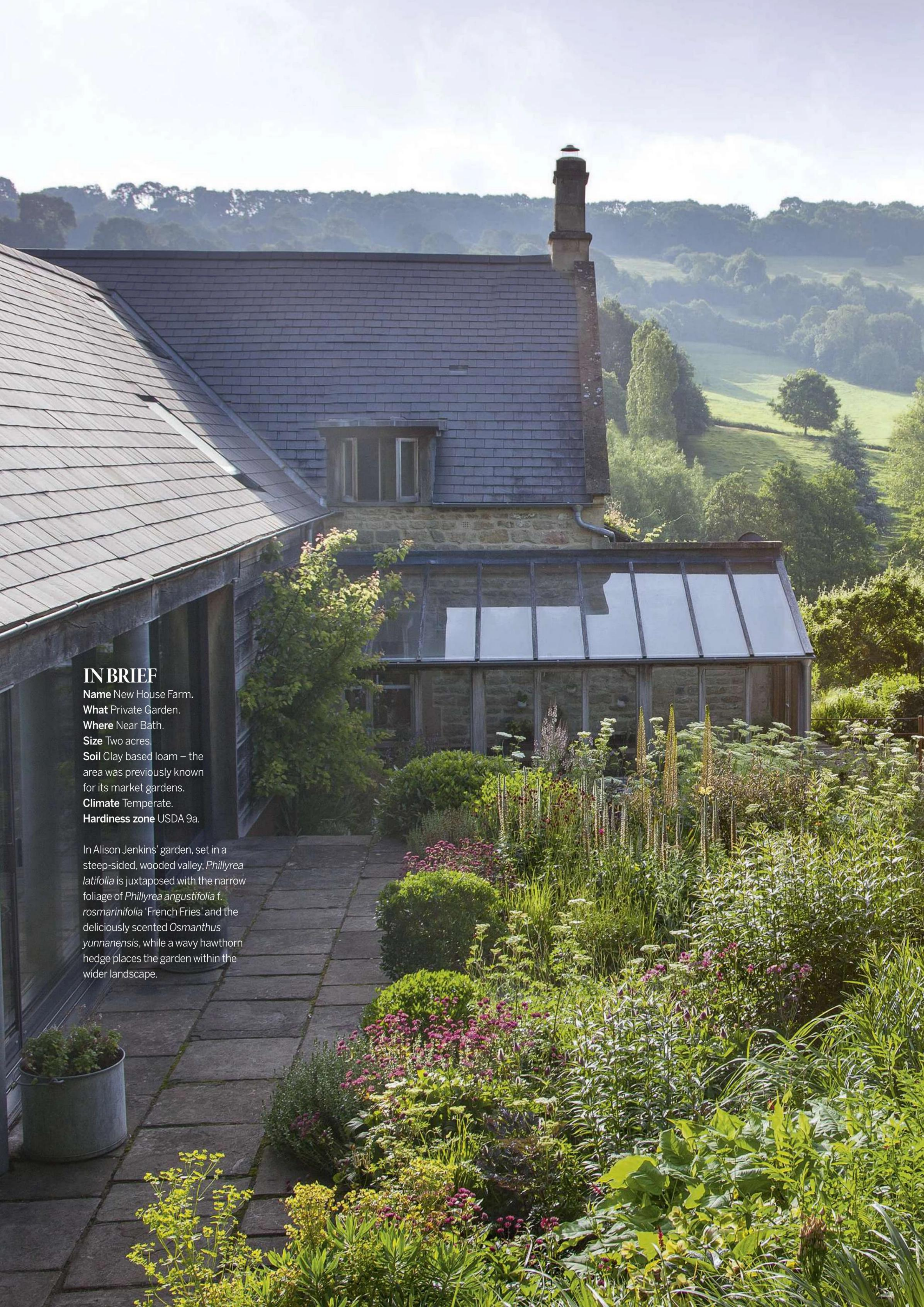


Tastefulness is fine but you can be tasteful and be zingy. Colour makes people feel alive; they are sometimes scared of that sort of thing and they shouldn't be

The charm of common foxgloves is amplified by opium poppies (*Papaver somniferum*), in this case selected forms chosen for their jewel-like colours. The seeds originated from a friend whose garden was designed by a young Dan Pearson and filmed for television.



IN BRIEF

Name New House Farm.
What Private Garden.
Where Near Bath.
Size Two acres.
Soil Clay based loam – the area was previously known for its market gardens.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9a.

In Alison Jenkins' garden, set in a steep-sided, wooded valley, *Phillyrea latifolia* is juxtaposed with the narrow foliage of *Phillyrea angustifolia* f. *rosmarinifolia* 'French Fries' and the deliciously scented *Osmanthus yunnanensis*, while a wavy hawthorn hedge places the garden within the wider landscape.

Natural beauty

In her own garden, designer Alison Jenkins has used a sophisticated palette of colourful planting that sits lightly in its Somerset setting

WORDS **SARAH PRICE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANNAÏCK GUITTENY**

Visiting someone else's garden is source of both pleasure and inspiration, seeing how another gardener expresses their own vision and responds to a particular location and setting. Having crossed paths at plant fairs, conferences and nurseries with designer and horticulturist Alison Jenkins it is great finally to visit the Cotswold home she shares with sculptor Patrick Heron. The approach to the house is exciting in itself: a narrow winding lane along St Catherine's Valley, a deep cut and wooded limestone valley just outside Bath. The double fronted stone elevation appears set back from the lane in clouds of informal plantings, a teasing view of horticultural artistry for passers by: clouds of white *Ammi* umbellifers intermingled with the rich plum of poppies and *Erysimum* 'Red Jep', copper grasses and the beautiful apricot tones of *Oenothera stricta* 'Sulphurea', a desirable evening primrose.

Sheltered by the valley's slope, the planting appears to tumble down in waves. *Cenolophium denudatum* and *Ligusticum* (a prolific self-seeder here) form soft-white horizontal accents, a loosely drawn froth that contrasts with spires of foxtail lilies and the dots and dashes of scarlet astrantias and magenta geraniums. Colour is important and carefully considered; *Digitalis parviflora* 'Milk Chocolate', *Sanguisorba* 'Chocolate Tip', and *Baptisia* 'Dutch Chocolate' all harmonise with the rusty tones of steel within the garden while chartreuse euphorbias pack a vibrant punch.

Despite its cocooning by hedge, slope and building, this garden area feels light and open to the sky. Rusted steel panels retain the slope creating a series of paved level terraces. Calm areas of negative space that offset the wild abundance of planting. A shallow rill extends the length of the paving and trickles into reclaimed stone troughs at the bottom of each terraced level. It's a small detail that animates the whole of the space as birds, frogs and even grass snakes come to drink, aided by the 'layered' vegetation that provides a variety of habitats surrounding the water.

Wavy hawthorn hedging acts as a protective corridor for wildlife out of which an old and straggly blackthorn tree is silhouetted, teaming with songbirds. I admire its characterful, slightly awkward shape that closely resembles Patrick's highly detailed, awe-inspiring sculptures of thorn, insects and birds. Keeping the old blackthorn feels symbolic; both Alison and Patrick have resisted the urge to make the space 'perfect' and instead have welcomed nature in. Wildlife loves a tangle of contrasting plant form and height but it's often hard for people to loosen their control and welcome nature close to home. The tightly defined framework of Alison's hard landscape means that there's enough structure to absorb the 'messiness' of nature.

Alison's use of evergreens is sophisticated. Loosely clipped forms appear to cushion each stone or rusted steel retaining wall around her house. *Ilex* x *koehneana* 'Chestnut Leaf', a particularly handsome holly with large, shiny leaves, and drought-tolerant *Phillyrea latifolia* are juxtaposed with the exceptionally pretty, narrow foliage of *Phillyrea angustifolia* f. *rosmarinifolia* 'French Fries'. In close proximity is the February-flowering and deliciously scented *Osmanthus yunnanensis*. Later in the spring the confident wide spreading dome of evergreen *Euphorbia* x *pasteurii* 'Phrampton Phatty' has large mounds of honey-scented, yellow-brown flowers. These rounded forms are contrasted with fine, skyward-rocketing grasses. Most beautiful is *Oryzopsis miliacea*, which flowers from summer to late winter with whorled flowerheads routinely staggered up the stem, like a refined horsetail.

Alison and Patrick are increasingly preoccupied with questions of what it means to garden in the face of a global climate emergency. What species will thrive in a climate that is warmer and more prone to extreme storms and droughts? How should we balance ornamental with productive gardening? What is a low-impact garden? How can we restore the health of depleted soils? What role is there for our gardens in reducing species and habitat loss? These questions are changing Alison's way of gardening. She has become more resourceful, using mole dirt to bulk up home-made compost, for example, to avoid a car trip to the garden centre and more unrecyclable plastic sacks. Her hedgerows are rich in free and sustainable resources such as coppiced hazel poles, and nettles and wild garlic for soup.

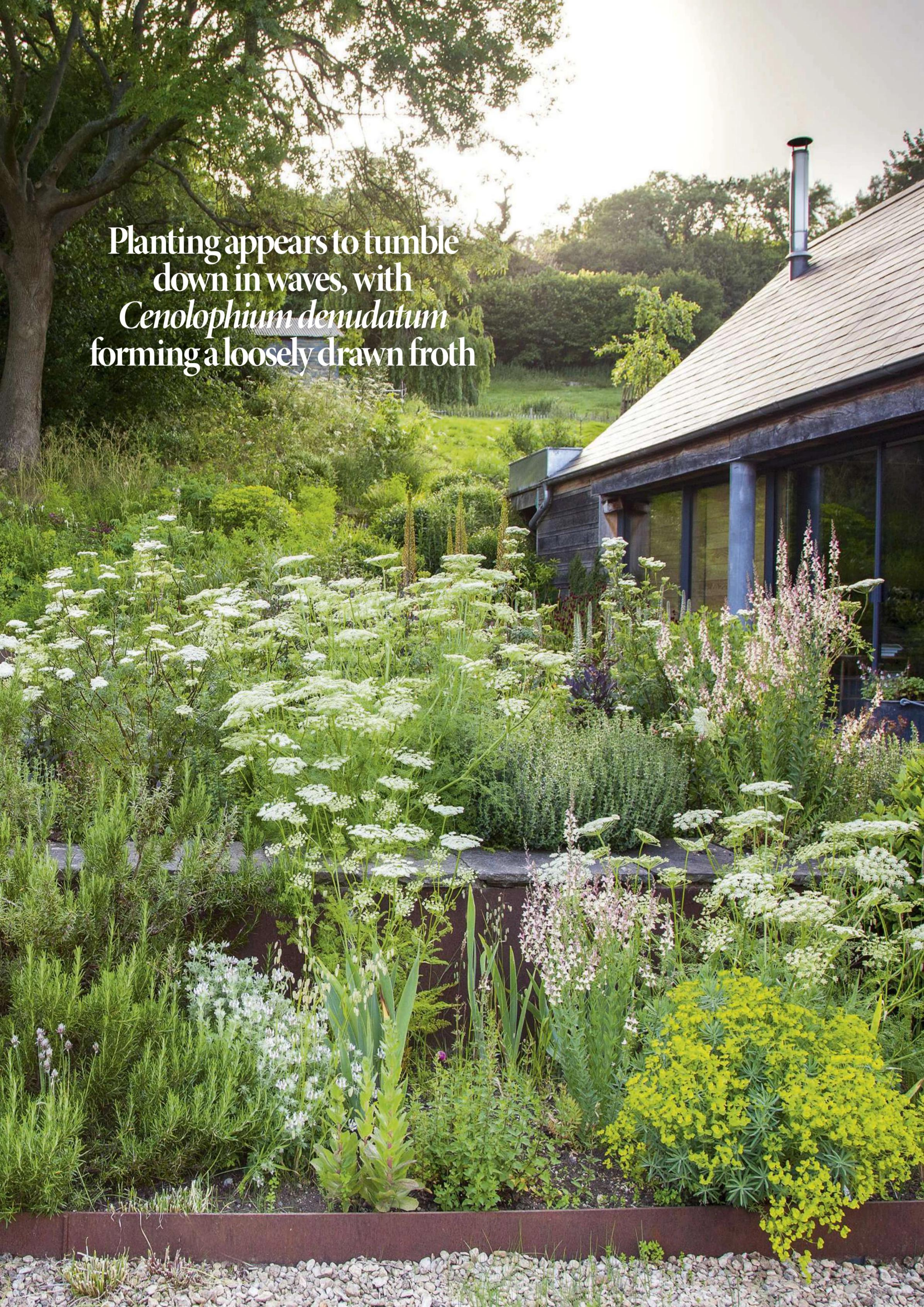
For Alison, productive gardening is a way of making a powerful connection with people. "I want to help people have the confidence to grow their own. Knowing about the soil your salad has grown in might sounds like a small thing, but it really matters to the way you think about the world," she says. Eager to connect people and share knowledge, she invites specialists into her home and holds workshops on composting, making growing structures with willow and boosting soil fertility through bokashi, a traditional Japanese way of fermenting food waste. It's about sharing ideas and experiences in person, and visiting inspiring garden like New House Farm. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

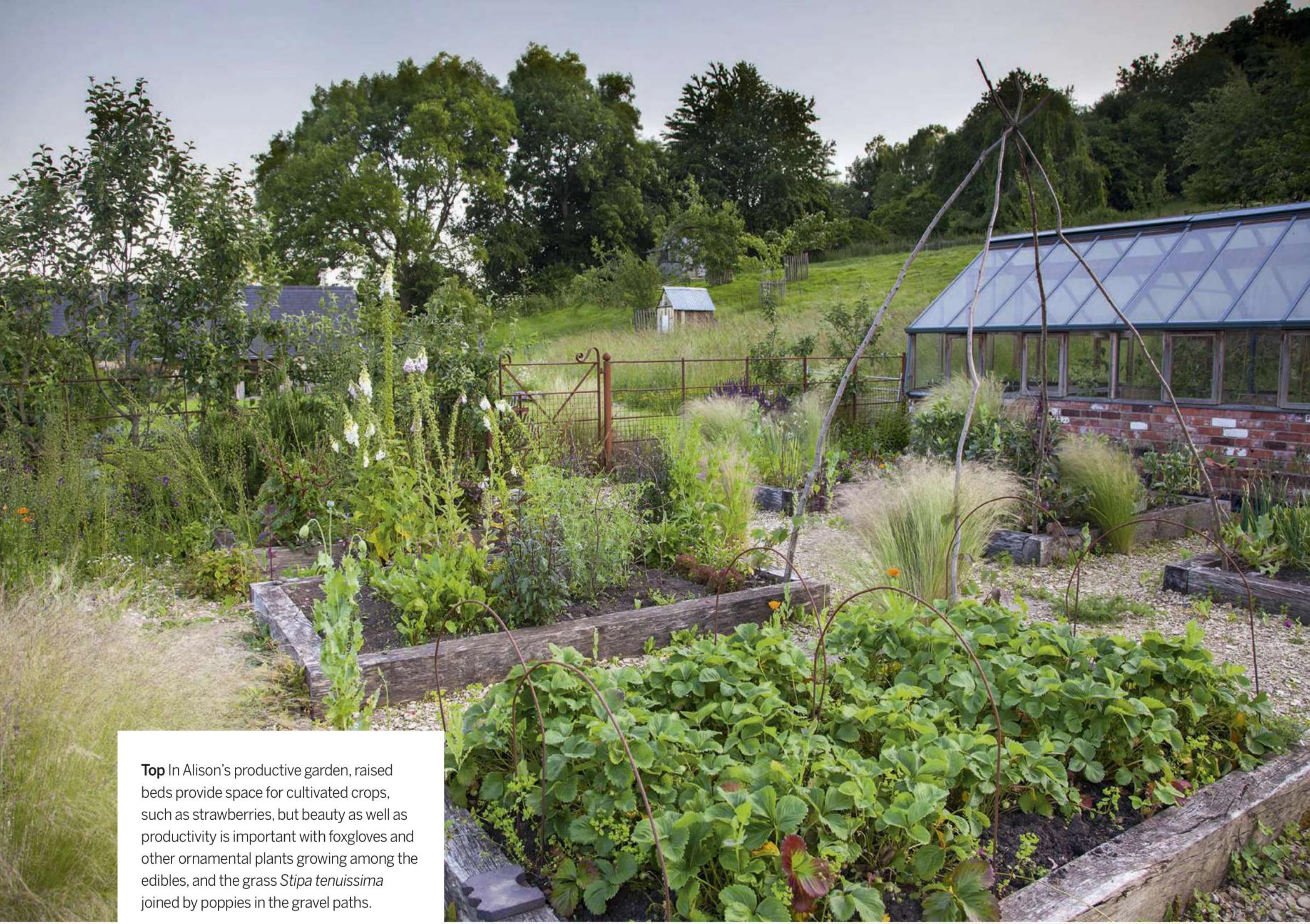
Find out more about Alison's work at **alisonjenkins.co.uk**

Turn the page to see more of New House Farm and 12 of Alison's key plants

Right Beyond the shade of a mature ash tree, sun lovers thyme, *Lotus hirsutus* and the self-seeding, monocarpic *Ligusticum lucidum* intermingle. The exceptionally long flowering *Euphorbia seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana* forms a massed froth of acid-yellow flowers that offset the deep greens of *Phillyrea latifolia*, *P. angustifolia* f. *rosmarinifolia* 'French Fries' and rosemary. These loosely clipped green forms act as visual anchor points to the more ethereal perennials that appear almost to float above.

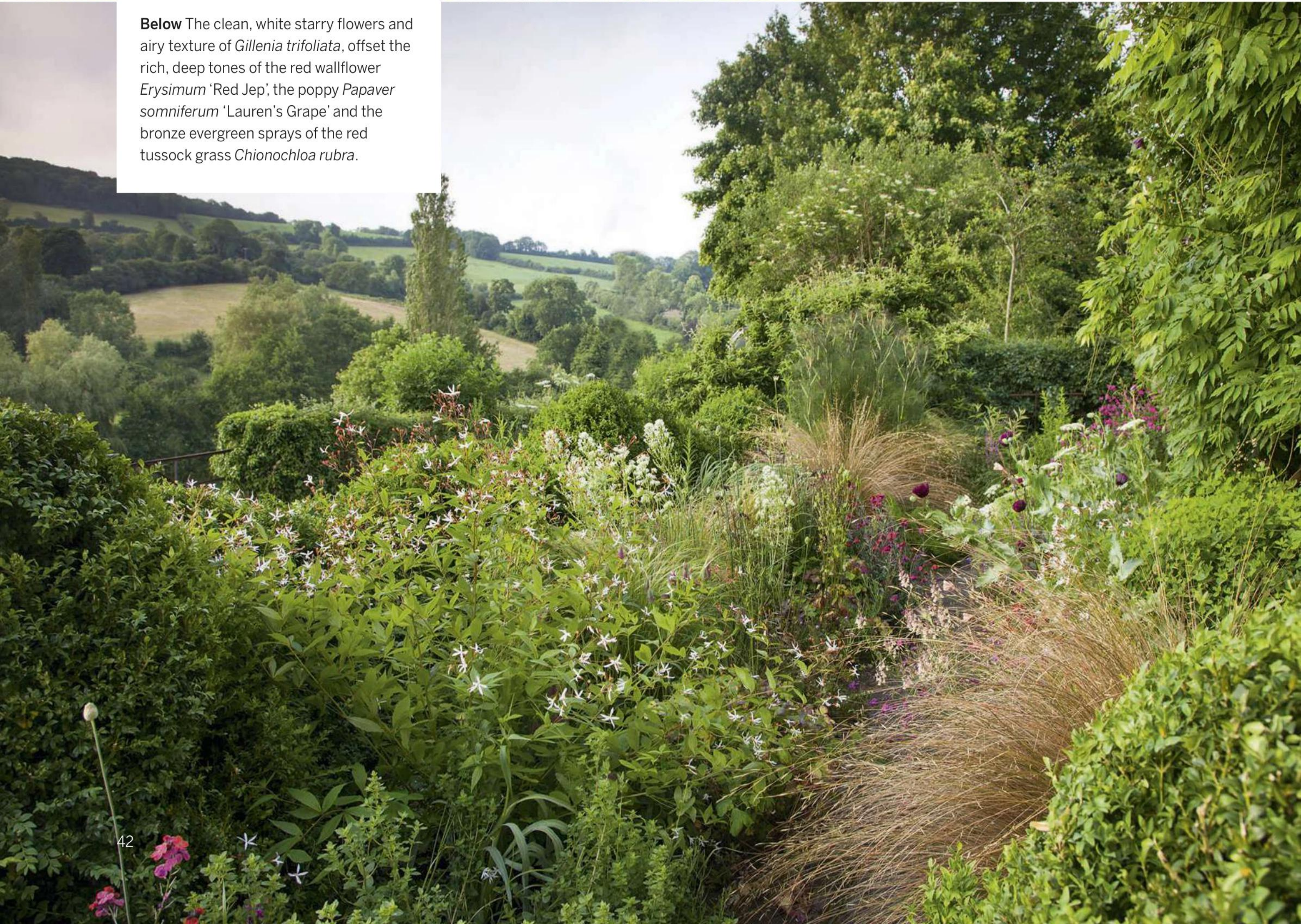


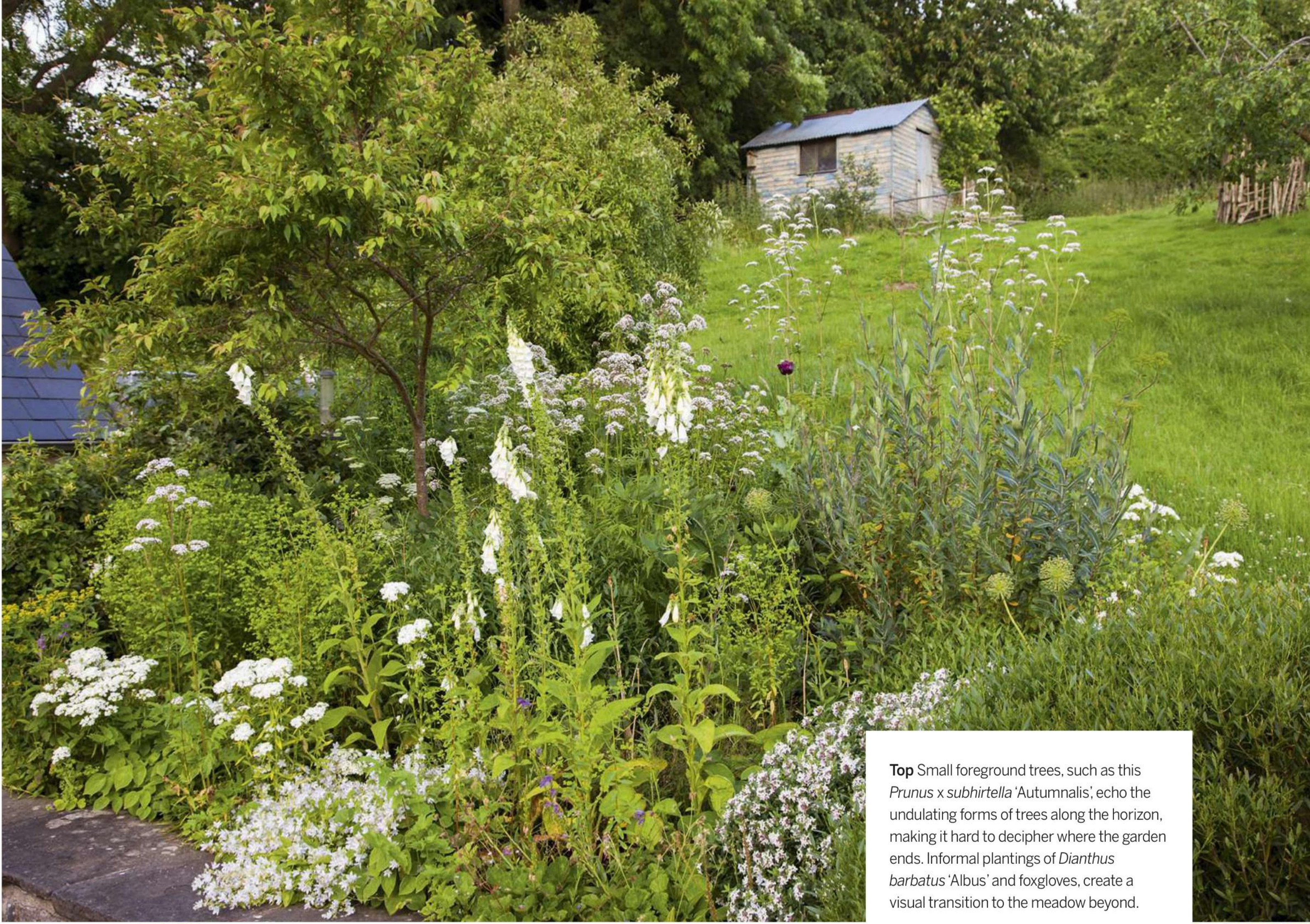
Planting appears to tumble down in waves, with *Cenolophium denudatum* forming a loosely drawn froth

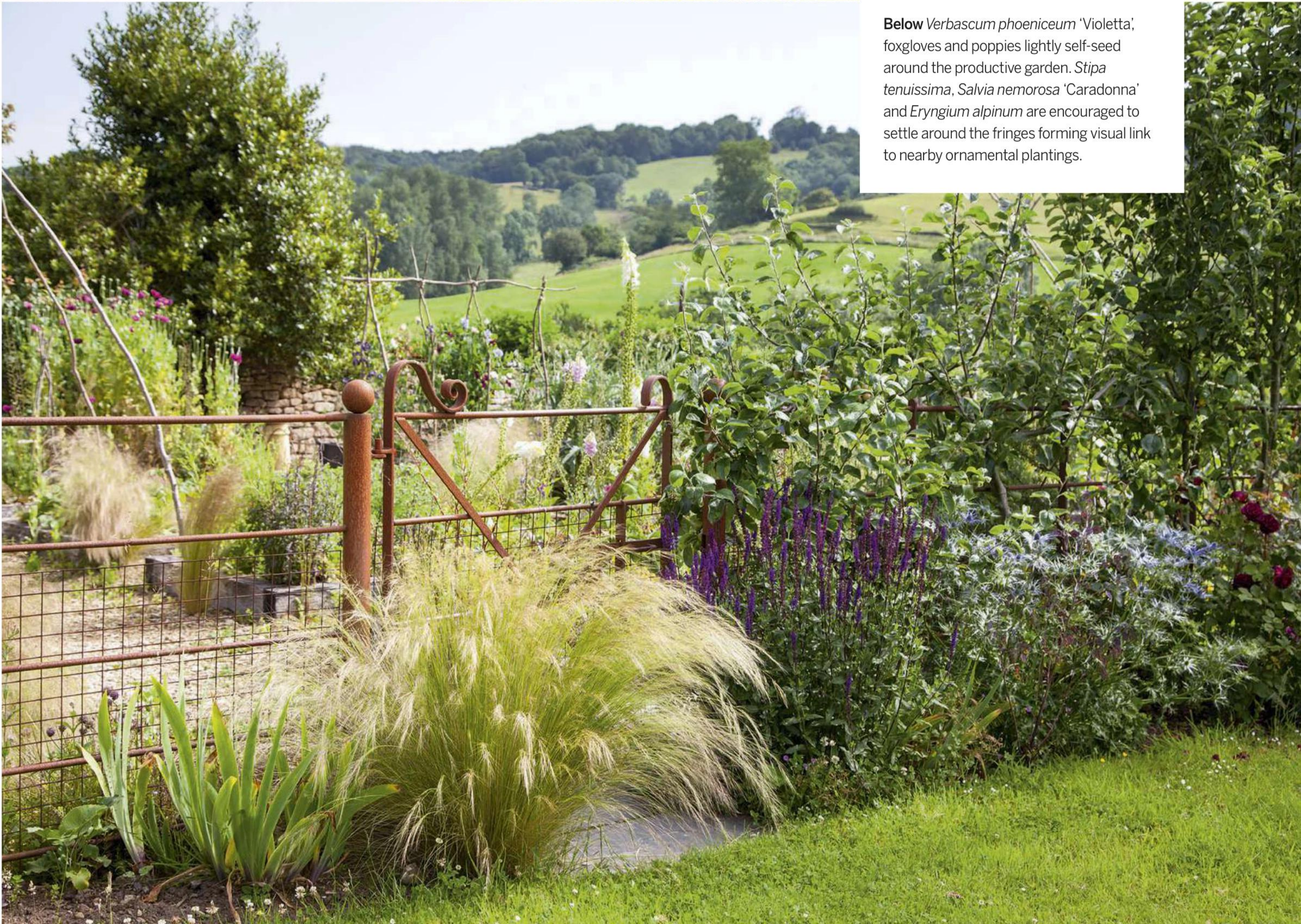


Top In Alison's productive garden, raised beds provide space for cultivated crops, such as strawberries, but beauty as well as productivity is important with foxgloves and other ornamental plants growing among the edibles, and the grass *Stipa tenuissima* joined by poppies in the gravel paths.

Below The clean, white starry flowers and airy texture of *Gillenia trifoliata*, offset the rich, deep tones of the red wallflower *Erysimum* 'Red Jep', the poppy *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape' and the bronze evergreen sprays of the red tussock grass *Chionochloa rubra*.

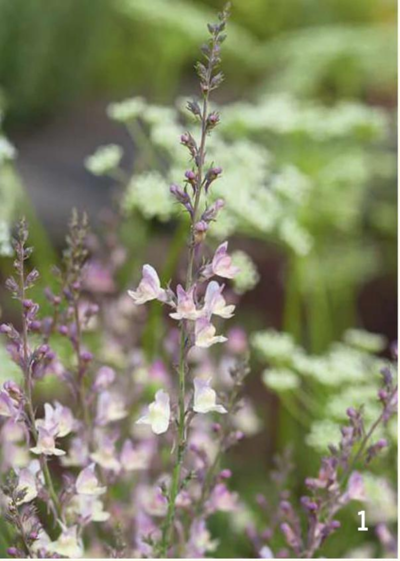






Top Small foreground trees, such as this *Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis', echo the undulating forms of trees along the horizon, making it hard to decipher where the garden ends. Informal plantings of *Dianthus barbatus* 'Albus' and foxgloves, create a visual transition to the meadow beyond.

Below *Verbascum phoeniceum* 'Violetta', foxgloves and poppies lightly self-seed around the productive garden. *Stipa tenuissima*, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' and *Eryngium alpinum* are encouraged to settle around the fringes forming visual link to nearby ornamental plantings.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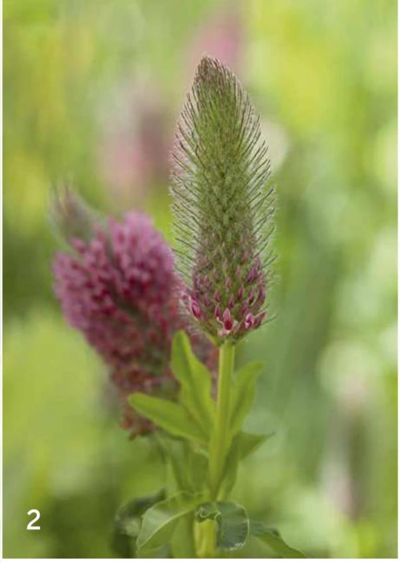
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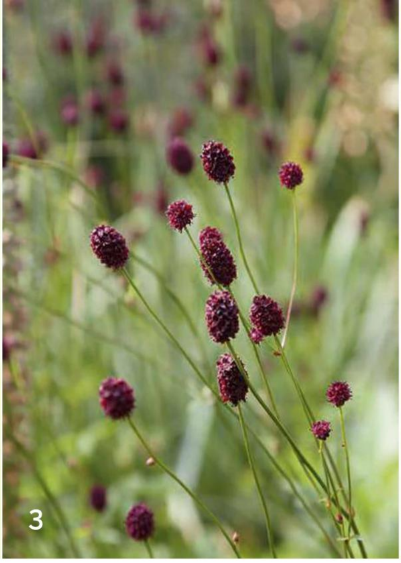
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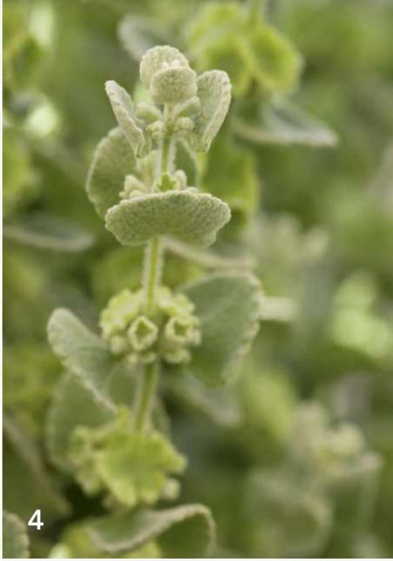
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12 KEY PLANTS

1 *Linaria* 'Peachy' Sunset-coloured, floriferous toadflax with glaucous foliage and two-toned trumpets that flower all summer. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b†.

2 *Trifolium rubens* Upright clover with clusters of downy-silver buds, turning to wine-red flowers in late summer. Rich in nectar and suited to informal schemes. Grow in sun with adequate moisture, not too much heat. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

3 *Sanguisorba* 'Chocolate Tip' Massed sprays of maroon, bobble-like flowers on upright wiry stems that are held clear of foliage. Offers low mounds of pinnate, blue-green serrated leaves with a faint chocolate red midrib. 1.2m. USDA 4a-8b.

4 *Ballota pseudodictamnus* Low-growing, evergreen shrub with soft, felted grey-green foliage on long, pale, curving stems. Pink flowers appear on whorled spears in late summer. Loves a hot dry spot and poor soil. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

5 *Stipa tenuissima* Fine, bright-green foliage turns sandy-tan in autumn and stands throughout winter. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-11b.

6 *Lotus hirsutus* Soft, silver-leaved sub-shrub that will form a spreading mat in gravel gardens or rockeries. Arching stems bear pale-pink pea-flowers at their tips in summer. Brown, starry seedpods last the winter. 60cm. RHS H4. USDA 7b-10b.

7 *Penstemon* 'Raven' Deep pink-purple flowers with white throats draw the eye when planted among pale-flowered companions. Will attract plenty of pollinators. Deadhead regularly and flowers will persist until first frost. 1m. RHS H3, USDA 7a-9b.

8 *Geranium* x *riversleaianum* 'Russell Prichard' Prolific magenta blooms offset by attractive grey-green foliage. Fantastic edging plant that flowers from May to November. Prostrate but will scramble up neighbouring plants. 40cm. AGM. RHS H4.

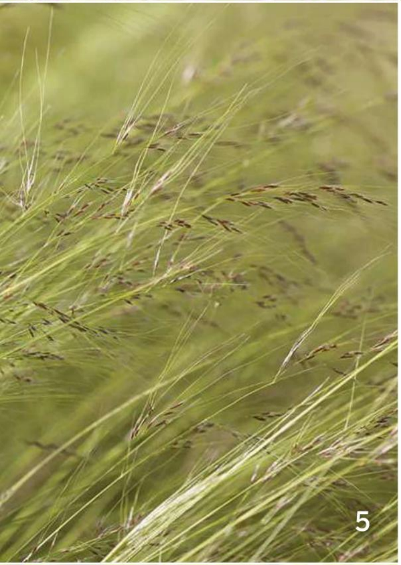
9 *Briza maxima* Tufts of smooth, grey-green leaves bear delicate, heart-shaped spikelets on slender stems that shiver in the wind. This greater quaking grass is a beautiful annual grass that can become a prolific self-seeder on light soils. Happy in both sun or light shade. 20-50cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

10 *Salvia microphylla* 'Cerro Potosí' Magenta-pink flowers offset by fresh green, aromatic leaves. An exceptionally long flowering and hardy form. Popular with bees. Evergreen. Flowers from June to November. 90cm. AGM. RHS H4.

11 *Eremurus* x *isabellinus* 'Cleopatra' Bottle-brush spikes of burnt-orange flowers appear in early summer. Glaucous, sword-like foliage dies back before flowers appear. Tubers like to bake in the sun after flowering. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

12 *Dianthus barbatus* 'Barbarini White' A pretty, white sweet William that Alison admires most when it is in bud. 50cm. RHS H7.

***Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.**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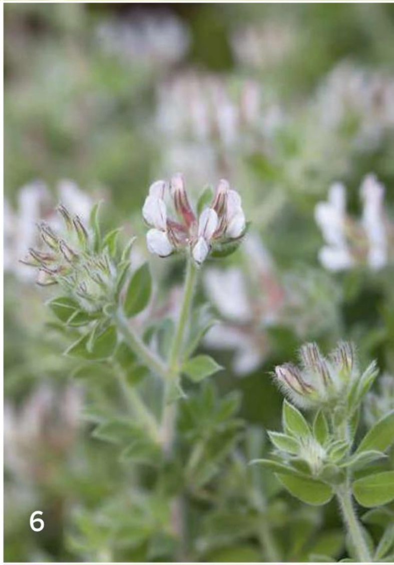
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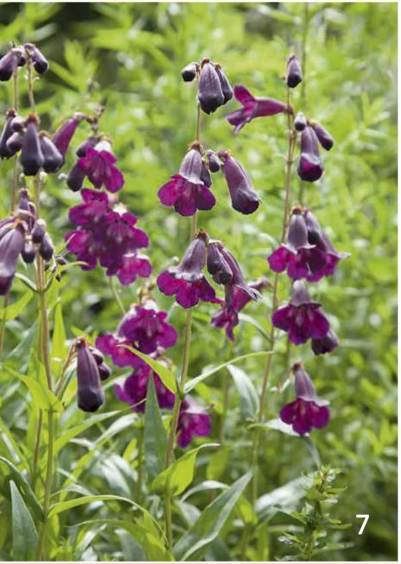
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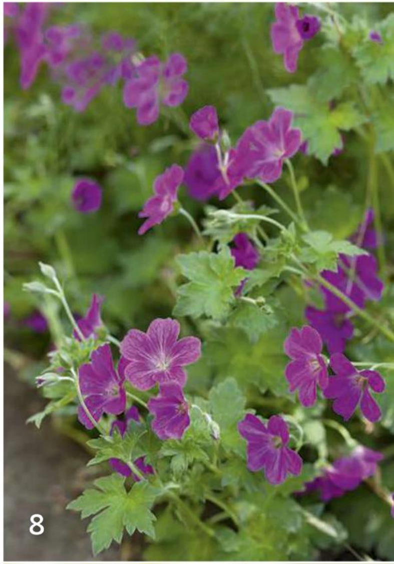
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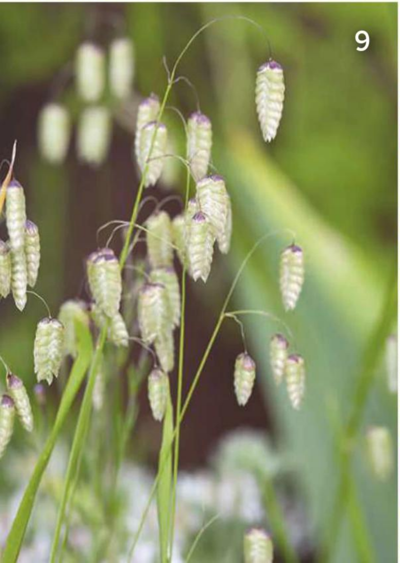
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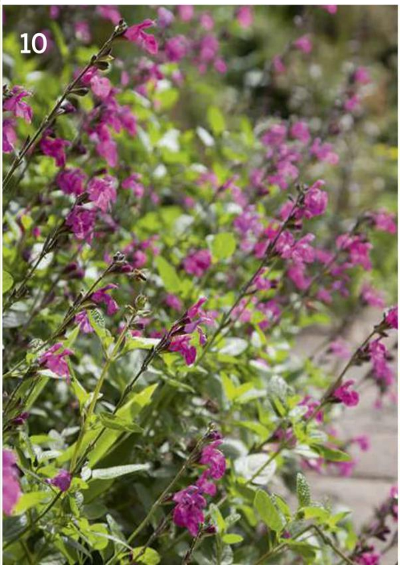
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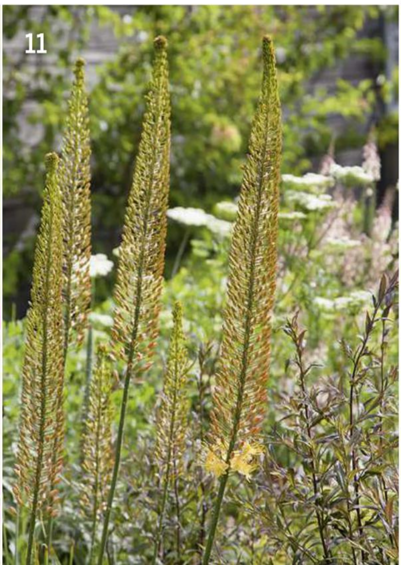
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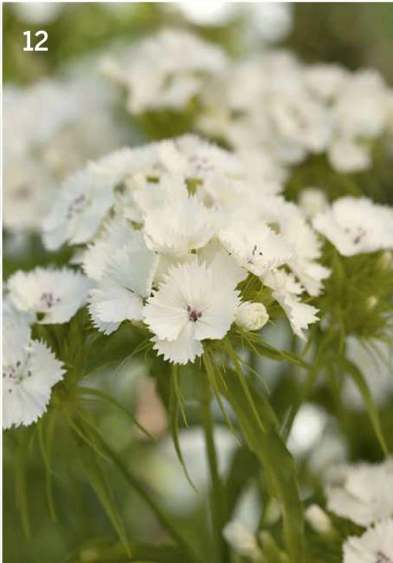
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Wildlife loves a tangle of contrasting plant form and height but it's often hard for people to loosen their control and welcome nature close to home

Teucrium x *lucidrys*, a bushy, aromatic sub shrub, and domes of *Astrantia* 'Ruby Star' mimic the loosely clipped, rounded forms of *Phillyrea latifolia*. *Cenolophium denudatum* umbels form a horizontal contrast. Spires of *Eremurus* x *isabellinus* 'Cleopatra' and *Digitalis parviflora* 'Milk Chocolate', help direct the gaze towards distant hills.

Full of life

Head gardener Fergus Garrett always knew the gardens at Great Dixter were more biodiverse than many ecologists might think, but even he was surprised to find out how much wildlife they supported

WORDS **FERGUS GARRETT** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

The garden at Great Dixter has a reputation for being loose. Christopher Lloyd believed in plants coming first, inspired by his mother he championed a semi-naturalistic touch flowing through the veins of his garden, filtering through the borders, brushing the skirts of the hedges, walls and topiary pieces, lining the edges of the paths and running through the cracks in the floor and walls. Known for his swashbuckling style of cannas and dahlias, bright colours and endless experiments, Christo was lesser known for this softer side. Nonetheless, he was deeply in tune and respectful of life in the garden and the woodlands around him were his solace. When he died in 2006, I continued to garden in very much the same manner except I sprayed less and didn't use as much inorganic fertiliser, phasing these out altogether within a few years. I allowed the edges of the garden and car parks, to become blurred, encouraging the hedges to billow out, and stopped mowing the verges. The place became more charming, bulging in vegetation, alive and humming with life. This, along with badgers in both woods, a dawn chorus to deafen you, and with great crested newts thriving in the Sunk Garden Pond, we felt content.

Aware of the decline of pollinators, my assistant Sarah Seymour contacted Dr Nikki Gammans to survey the bumblebees at Dixter, and a group of lepidopterists led by the late Tony Harman set up regular moth traps. Both showed impressive and fascinating results. Spurred on, I asked the British Arachnological Society to visit the garden. They seemed reluctant – not expecting an intensive, well-known garden such as Great Dixter to offer anything interesting. I realised that gardens were often regarded as sterile spaces by ecologists – much in the same way wildlife gardens were thought to be weedy bramble patches by gardeners. Once with us, the arachnologists realised what an extraordinarily rich site Great Dixter was, and soon after their visit we were on the front page of the British Arachnological Society newsletter with several pages of text outlining the great diversity of spiders including some nationally scarce species.

But our efforts seemed fragmented and incomplete – various ad hoc surveys here and there didn't give us a handle on the overall picture. Biodiversity isn't about just a few select species, but an integrated world with one element impacting on the ▷

This image Rambling roses spill over walls mixing with red flowered *Centranthus ruber* and its white form 'Albus', and with *Erigeron karvinskianus* and the long grass of the Upper Moat – all providing valuable food and habitats for wildlife.

Facing page The wildflower meadows at Great Dixter flow right up to the mixed borders with just mown grass and York stone paths separating the two. Meadow cutting is delayed until insect activity has slowed down and the seeds are set.

We hadn't gardened specifically for biodiversity – it was just here as a by-product

▷ other. We needed a full comprehensive biodiversity audit, looking at everything from beetles to ants, hoverflies to flies, from mosses to lichens. This would give us the knowledge that was key to managing our land in an intelligent and effective way.

Archaeologists, naturalists, ecologists, botanists and entomologist were commissioned to carry out the survey dividing the Great Dixter Estate into different zones such as the woodlands, pasture and meadows, formal ornamental gardens, ponds, and the Plant Fair Field. Each zone was surveyed and the findings fed to one principal ecologist who analysed and pulled the information together in a report. The results were astonishing. As expected, the wider estate with its ancient woodlands, pastures and meadows, and ponds was extremely rich. But, surprisingly the richest part of all was the ornamental garden. Although all zones work together with one feeding another, the survey clearly showed the garden, even with its high octane displays and penchant for bedding out, supported an extraordinary amount of wildlife. We hadn't gardened specifically for biodiversity – it was just here as a by-product.

There was an exceptional assemblage of birds recorded throughout the site. Over 40 per cent of the UK's bee species were logged within just one year. Rare and scarce butterflies and moths, such as the purple emperor (*Apatura iris*) and the scarce forest tubic (*Apoda limacodes*), delighted the team. It soon became obvious that there was a presence of a significant pollinator community including a high abundance of nationally rare and scarce bees, wasps, hoverflies and moths, including rarities such as the white-bellied mining bee (*Andrena gravida*), and the greatly declined long-horned bee (*Eucera longicornis*).

The gardens provided a botanically and structurally rich habitat with the borders mimicking natural plant succession with one layer taking over from another providing a prolonged period of pollen and nectar from the winter through to autumn. Long grass sat next to short, some areas mown regularly, others less frequently, and some just left to turn into scrub. The estate had woodland with abundant woodland edge, it had water – clear in some cases and with vegetation in others – with shallow and muddy banks all adding to the habitat resource. There were regularly disturbed areas mimicking trauma and disturbance in the wild as well as settled plant communities. There were plenty of nest sites and breeding places, the buildings themselves serving as

Once regarded as part of the problem, gardens can now be seen as part of the solution living spaces with wall cavities and nooks and crannies. The stone and brick walls were porous and receptive to tube nesting bees, wasps and ants. The site was rich in lichen, and with rotting wood posts, old trees and large habitat piles there was plenty there for beetles and wood boring insects.

The list went on, but most importantly Great Dixter provided a diversity of food coupled with a diversity of habitats. And on top of this by using neither herbicides nor pesticides – we hadn't sprayed for ten years – there was a balance between host and predator. Our lead ecologist Andy Phillips, with more than 30 years of experience, was one of the few initially lukewarm about surveying Great Dixter. But now he sees us as a 'garden nature reserve' – a prime example of how biodiversity conservation can be integrated into gardening, demonstrating how gardens can play a crucial role in reversing the loss of biodiversity within the UK. A garden imitates woodland edge – a most diverse and valuable ecotone. And once regarded as part of the problem, gardens can now be seen as part of the solution.

The techniques used at Great Dixter can be replicated in any garden or semi-natural green space. In fact the mosaic system within Great Dixter could be replicated in any village, town or city – it just needs politicians, ecologists, town planners, councils, builders, landscapers, architects and landscape architects, volunteer groups, gardeners, and private individuals, to have the will to work together. This process has deepened the connection between us and the microcosm of life with which we share the garden. It has made everyday life more interesting and meaningful for all of us at Dixter. The results have encouraged us to do more, act more sensitively and with more direction, and hope that it provides impetus and inspiration for other places to act the same. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. **Tel** 01797 252878. **Web** greatdixter.co.uk
The Great Dixter Biodiversity Audit was funded through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund with support from private donors. Find out more at greatdixter.co.uk/house-and-estate/biodiversity

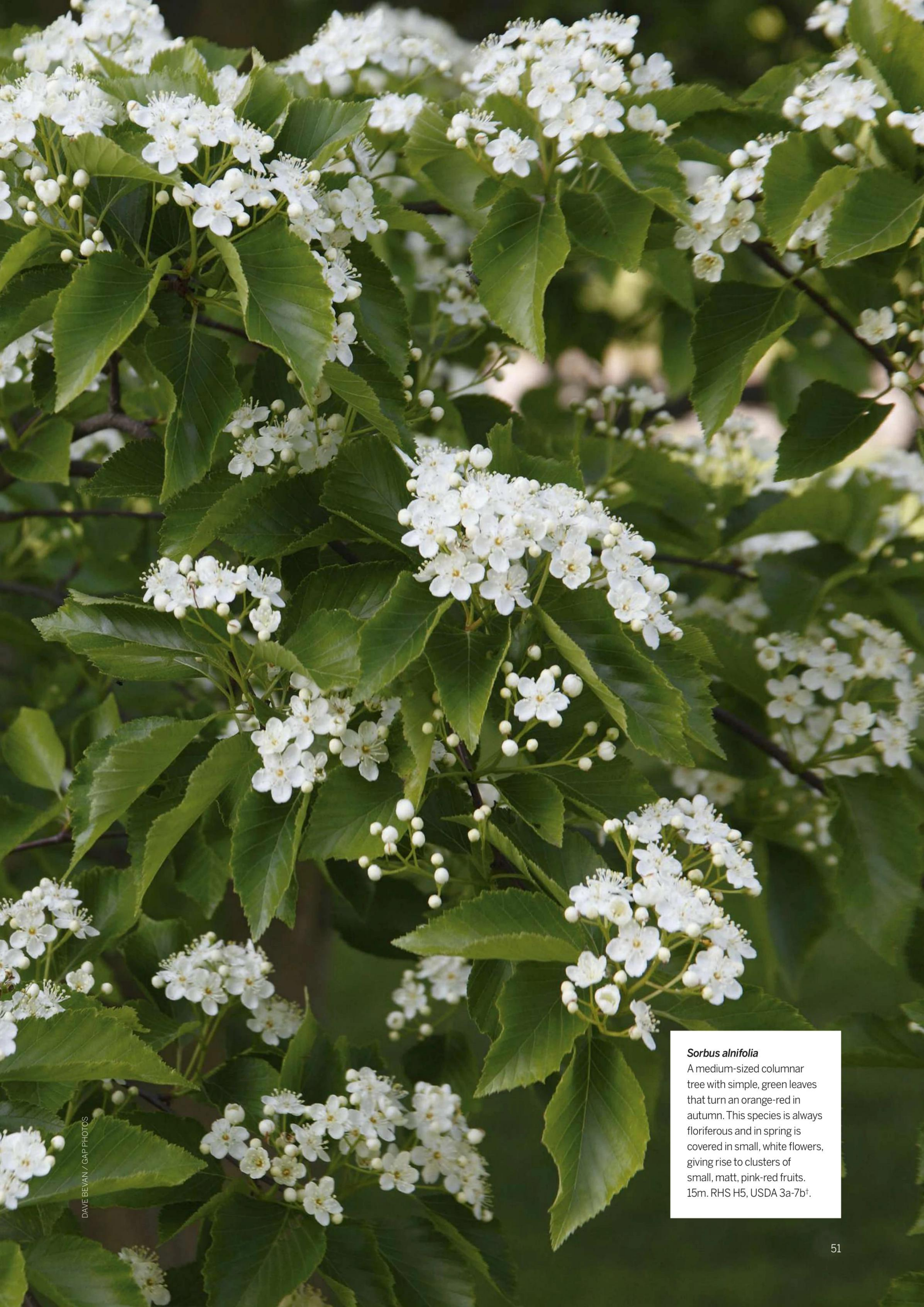
This image The borders at Great Dixter are full to the brim providing a long and lasting source of pollen and nectar for insects. Here *Verbascum olympicum*, larkspurs and hollyhocks self-seed among a bed of nursery stock plants.

Facing page The dry-stone walls that line the kitchen drive have a rich succession of flowers starting with *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var *robbiae*, followed by ox-eye daisies, *Ferula communis* and *Euphorbia characias* subsp *wulfenii*.

SORBUS

These easygoing and hard-working trees offer several seasons of interest from fragrant flowers in spring to richly coloured autumn fruits, as well as beautiful foliage

WORDS **TONY KIRKHAM**



Sorbus alnifolia
A medium-sized columnar tree with simple, green leaves that turn an orange-red in autumn. This species is always floriferous and in spring is covered in small, white flowers, giving rise to clusters of small, matt, pink-red fruits. 15m. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b†.

DAVE BEVAN / GAP PHOTOS

Show me a garden that wouldn't benefit from a rowan or a whitebeam, and I'll be very surprised. They're readily available in nurseries, fairly easy to grow and they are hard-working trees, with a range of seasonal attributes including interesting leaf shape and colour, highly scented corymbs of white flowers, an array of differing fruit shapes and colours, and various forms of habit and shape. Add to that their value for wildlife and you have a winner.

The genus *Sorbus,* to which these trees belong, contains around 200 species and numerous cultivars of mainly small- to medium-sized trees growing up to 20m. They're found growing across the northern hemisphere, from western Europe through Asia to the Himalayas and Japan, and in North America from Alaska to Arizona, and are at home in a variety of habitats, from lowland woodlands to high elevation limestone rocky outcrops in free-draining acid to alkaline soils. The red-fruiting American rowan, S. *americana* grows in marshland and moist soils but will also happily grow on dry rocky hillsides.

The genus has a complicated taxonomy but can easily be broken down into two main groups. The largest group is the subgenus *Sorbus*, commonly known as the rowan or mountain ash. These have pinnate leaves, terminal corymbs of flowers and small, round fruits called pomes, which contain two to ten soft seeds. They grow across the northern hemisphere from North America to temperate Asia. *Sorbus aucuparia* is our native rowan, with several good cultivars that have been selected for gardens, such as 'Asplenifolia' with deeply cut leaves, 'Besissneri', with a narrow upright habit, and 'Sheerwater Seedling', a popular upright tree with a perfect oval-shaped crown and large trusses of orange berries. *Sorbus* x *kewensis* is a hybrid of two subspecies of *S. aucuparia*, and an outstanding fruiter. A popular cultivar, once sold as *S.* x *kewensis*, but most likely a seedling of *S.* 'Pagoda Red', is *S.* 'Chinese Lace', a beautiful tree, with lace-like, cut-leaf foliage. One of my all-time favourites in this group is, *Sorbus ulleungensis*, which I first encountered in 1989 on the island of Ulleungdo in the East Sea off the coast of South Korea, where I was collecting seed for the Arboretum at Kew. The tree was multi-stemmed on the summit of Seonginbong (984m elevation), the highest mountain on the island above the Port of Dodong. The cultivar *S. ulleungensis* 'Olympic Flame' has possibly the most electrifying autumn colour of any rowan with large trusses of bright-red berries hanging from its very stout branching habit.

The second group is the subgenus *Aria*, known as whitebeam. This group has entire leaves, usually with a silvery underside and terminal corymbs of larger fruits with a persistent calyx. The species in this group range naturally on alkaline soils through temperate Europe and Asia. *Sorbus aria*, the common whitebeam can be found growing naturally in free-draining, alkaline soil in open woodlands in southern England and throughout much of Europe, but in cultivation there are two particularly good cultivars. *S. aria* 'Lutescens', the silver-leaved whitebeam, is a medium-sized tree with a compact crown and silvery hairs on both sides of the new leaves, and *S. aria* 'Magnifica', with large leaves and clusters of creamy-white flowers, liked by bees, in late spring and large clusters of red fruits in autumn. There is a third group, the subgenus *Micromeles*, which differs slightly from the others in taxonomic terms in that its fruits have deciduous calyces and narrower leaves.

All grow naturally in Asia, with one of my favourites, both in spring for its flowers and in autumn for the persistent clusters of matt pink fruits, is the Korean whitebeam, *Sorbus alnifolia.* Another *Sorbus* in this group and always the first to flush into leaf in my garden, with its bronze foliage in January and February before the frosts have finished, is the Asian whitebeam, *Sorbus caloneura* from China. It must have some form of antifreeze in the leaves as it never ever gets frosted, even in the coldest London gardens. *Sorbus* are a must for planting in the treescape. □

• Author Tony Kirkham is head of Arboretum, Gardens and Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. His recommendations for the best *Sorbus* can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What Deciduous, hardy small- to medium-sized trees, occasionally shrubs, with ornamental flowering, fruiting and autumnal colour attributes. Commonly known as rowan (or mountain ash) and whitebeam.
Origins Northern hemisphere, from temperate North America to temperate Asia.
Season Flowering March to May and fruiting from September to November.
Size 1-20m high.
Conditions Requires a moist but free-draining acid or alkaline soil, not heavy wet clay.
Hardiness Sorbus are hardy in the UK (to temperatures from -15°C to -20°C), with an RHS hardiness rating of H5 to H6, and are suitable for gardens in USDA zones 3a to 7b.

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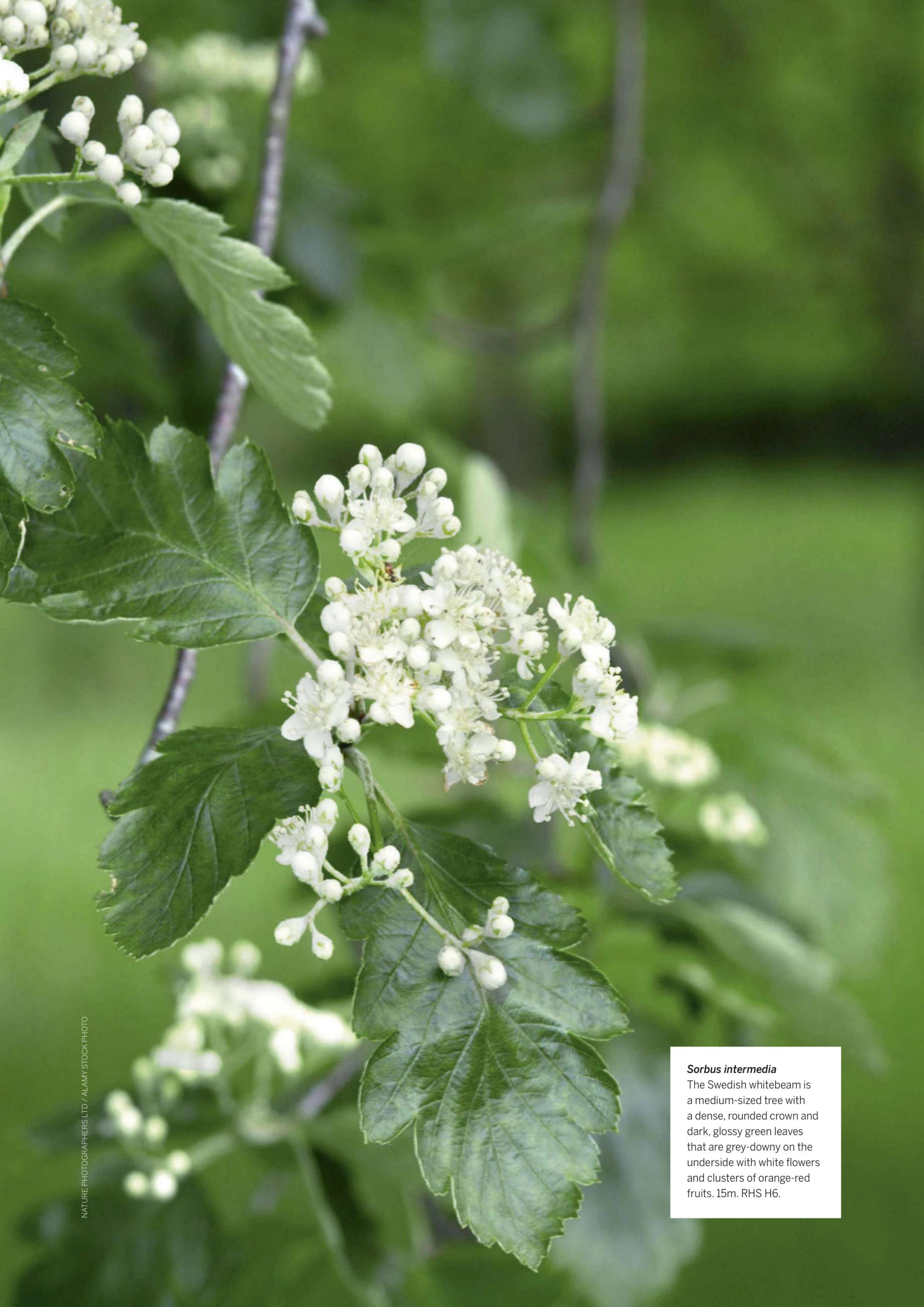
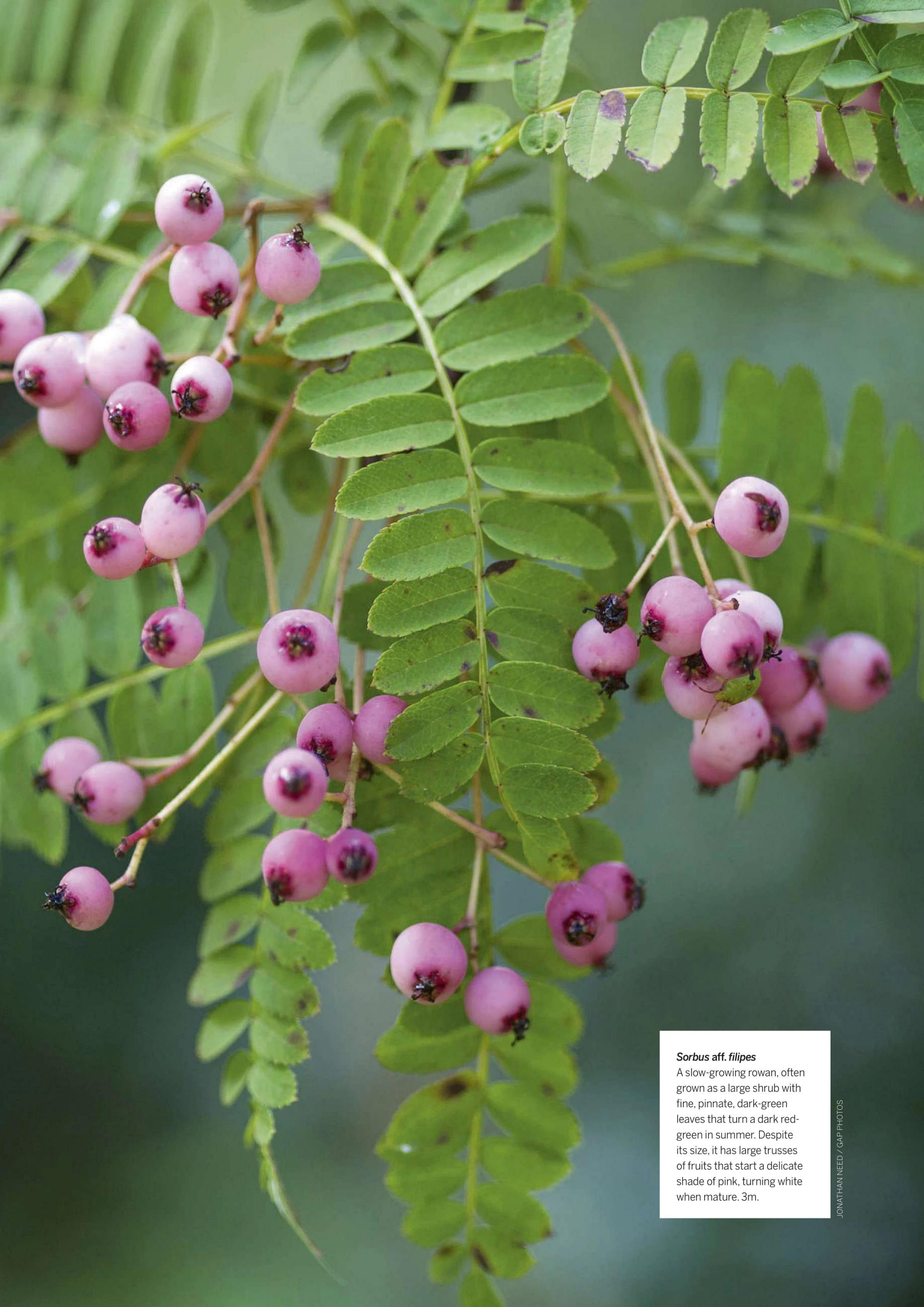
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sorbus intermedia
The Swedish whitebeam is a medium-sized tree with a dense, rounded crown and dark, glossy green leaves that are grey-downy on the underside with white flowers and clusters of orange-red fruits. 15m. RHS H6.



Sorbus* aff. *filipes
A slow-growing rowan, often grown as a large shrub with fine, pinnate, dark-green leaves that turn a dark red-green in summer. Despite its size, it has large trusses of fruits that start a delicate shade of pink, turning white when mature. 3m.

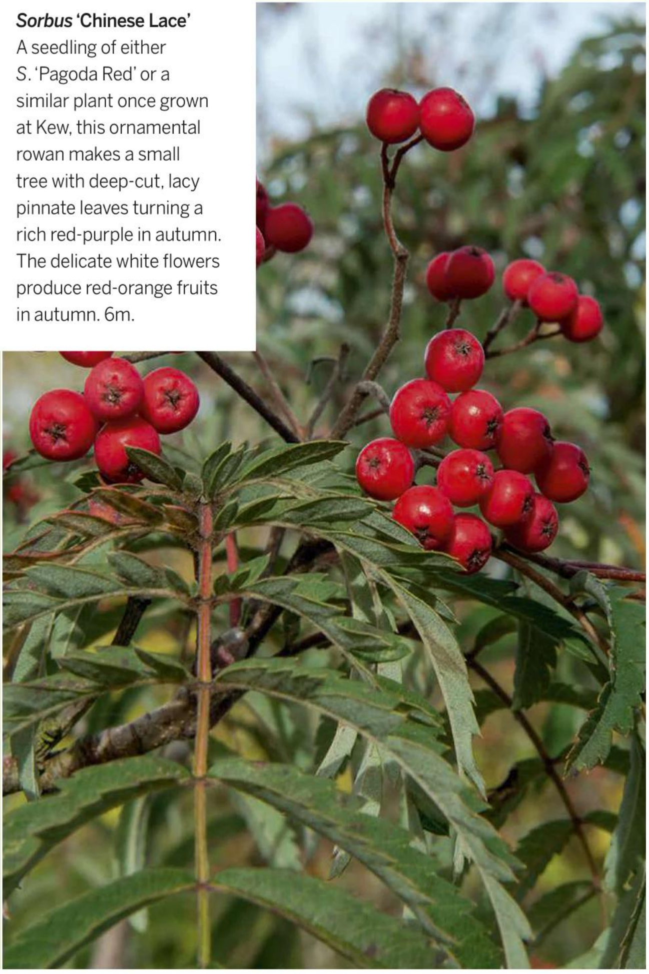
JONATHAN NEED / GAP PHOTOS

Sorbus* x *kewensis
This small tree, a hybrid of two subspecies of *S. aucuparia*, is an attractive rowan that has green pinnate leaves and offers highly scented flowers in spring. The bunches of bright-red autumn fruits are so abundant that they often weigh down its lateral branches. 6m.

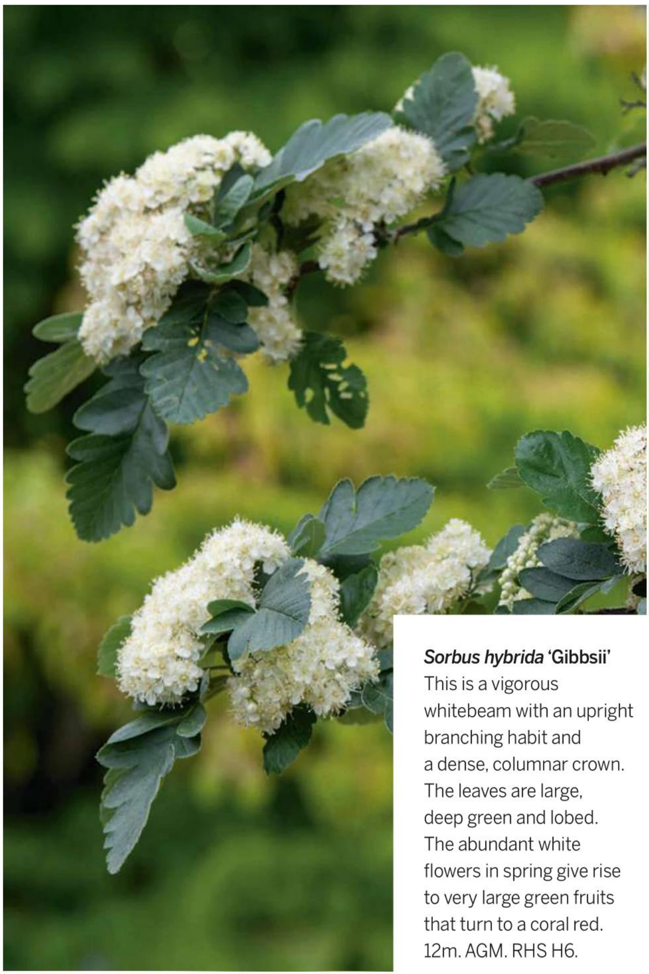
***Sorbus ulleungensis* 'Olympic Flame'**
This small tree has an extremely stiff and erect branching habit and stout buds with large green pinnate leaves. It has the best orange-red autumn colour of any rowan and large clusters of bright-red berries. 6m. AGM*. RHS H6.

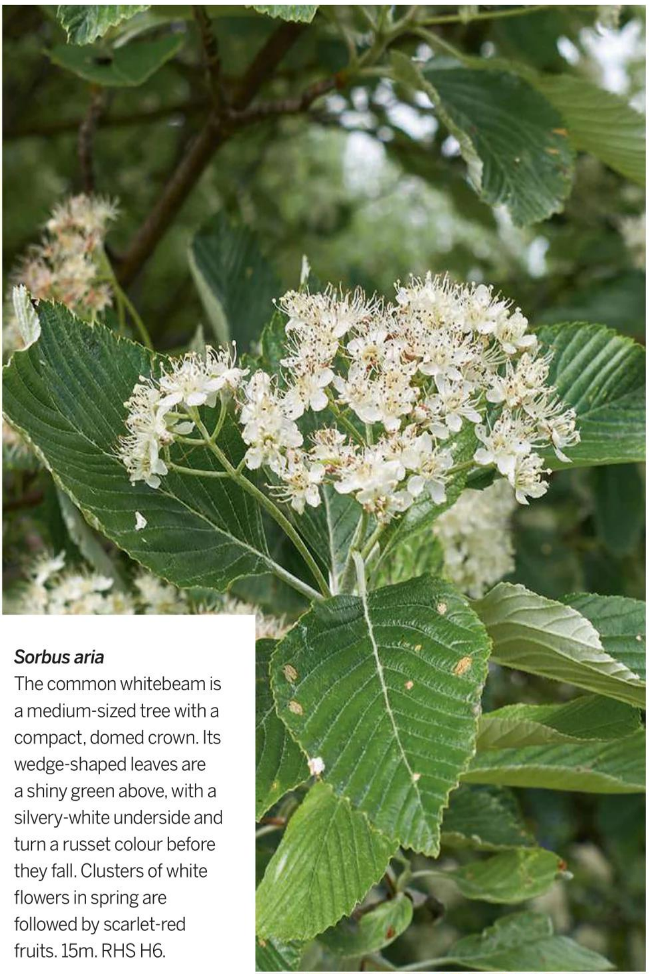
Sorbus vilmorinii
Known as Vilmorin's rowan, this is a small, elegant, spreading tree that has beautiful, delicate, fine, fern-like pinnate leaves with lots of small leaflets. The hanging clusters of white flowers are followed by small, deep-crimson-pink fruits. 6m. AGM. RHS H6.

***Sorbus* 'Chinese Lace'**
A seedling of either *S.* 'Pagoda Red' or a similar plant once grown at Kew, this ornamental rowan makes a small tree with deep-cut, lacy pinnate leaves turning a rich red-purple in autumn. The delicate white flowers produce red-orange fruits in autumn. 6m.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRIS COGGINS / GAP PHOTOS, TONY KIRKHAM, PETER TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY / SHUTTERSTOCK, DAVE BEVAN / GAP PHOTOS



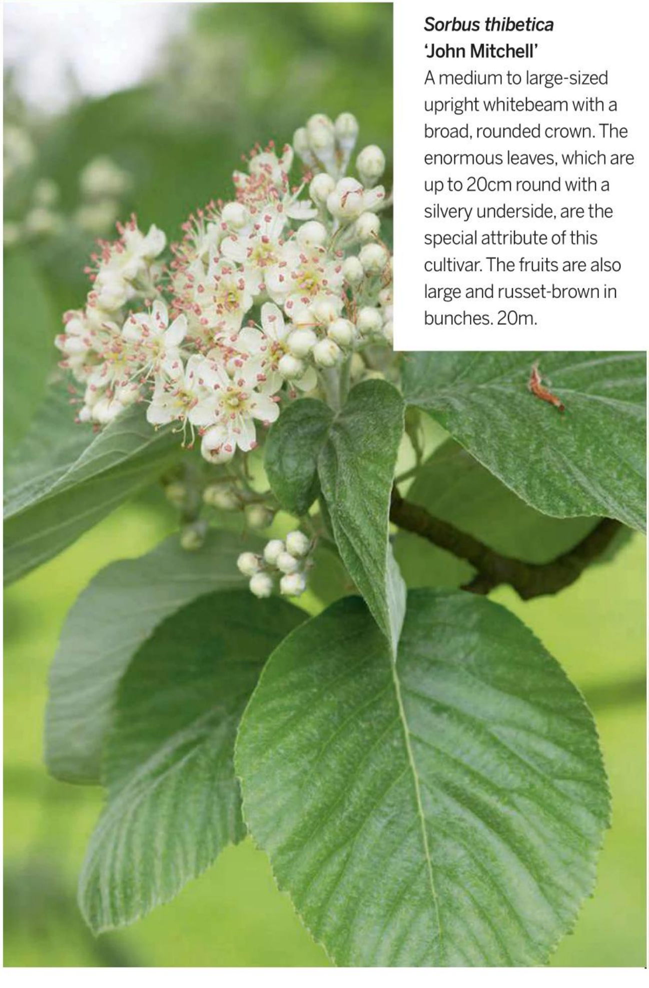


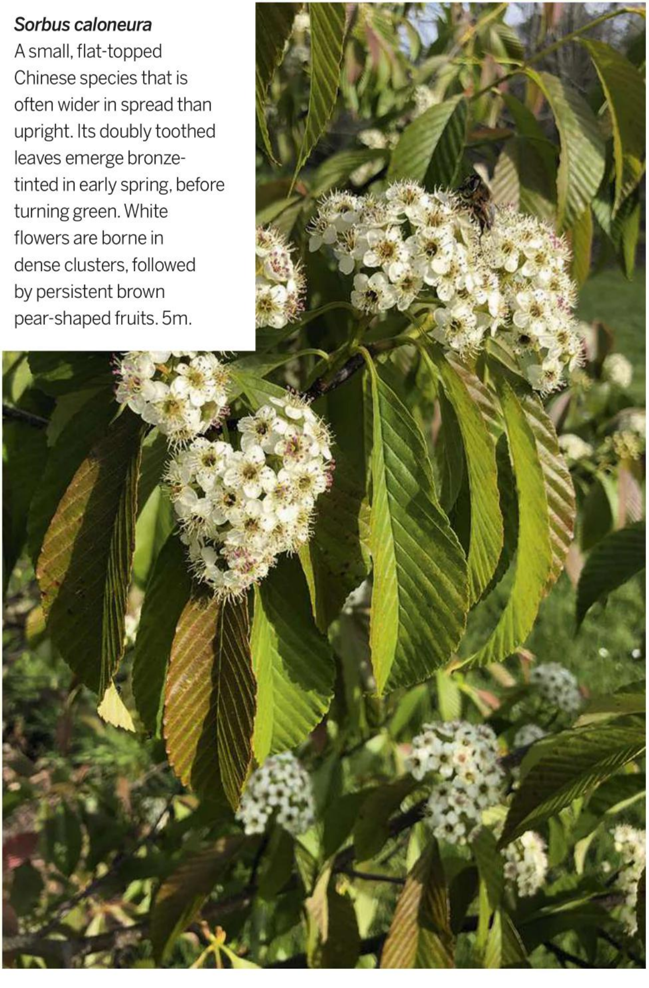
Sorbus hybrida* 'Gibbsii'
This is a vigorous whitebeam with an upright branching habit and a dense, columnar crown. The leaves are large, deep green and lobed. The abundant white flowers in spring give rise to very large green fruits that turn to a coral red. 12m. AGM. RHS H6.

Sorbus aria
The common whitebeam is a medium-sized tree with a compact, domed crown. Its wedge-shaped leaves are a shiny green above, with a silvery-white underside and turn a russet colour before they fall. Clusters of white flowers in spring are followed by scarlet-red fruits. 15m. RHS H6.

Sorbus thibetica* 'John Mitchell'
A medium to large-sized upright whitebeam with a broad, rounded crown. The enormous leaves, which are up to 20cm round with a silvery underside, are the special attribute of this cultivar. The fruits are also large and russet-brown in bunches. 20m.

Sorbus caloneura
A small, flat-topped Chinese species that is often wider in spread than upright. Its doubly toothed leaves emerge bronze-tinted in early spring, before turning green. White flowers are borne in dense clusters, followed by persistent brown pear-shaped fruits. 5m.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TIM GAINEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, STUDIO75 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, TONY KIRKHAM, TIM GAINEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sorbus pallescens
This Chinese whitebeam is an upright tree with narrow, linear leaves that are shiny green on the upper surface and silvery white on the underside. The cream flowers produce clusters of pear-shaped, white fruits from late summer that are tinged with pink. 9m.

Sorbus wardii
Known as the Tibetan whitebeam, this is a variable, columnar tree with a round spreading crown. The new leaves emerge downy and a silvery-grey colour, turning green and become heavily ribbed. The fruits are large, round, amber-orange and speckled. 12m.

TOP TONY KIRKHAM, BOTTOM CLARE GAINEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Cultivation

Most of the species *Sorbus*, such as *S. pallescens*, *S. aria* and *S. aucuparia*, found in nurseries are grown from seed. All the named cultivars, however, are grafted. This is because there is no other way to replicate the authenticity of a particular cultivar that will not come true to form from seed. I plant my rowans and whitebeams as young as possible when they're about 1-2m tall if grown from seed, and as a one-year old grafted maiden, just over 1m for the cultivars. Usually, these trees are container grown with young vigour and are generally quick to establish. With grafted specimens, the rootstocks will produce suckers that should be removed early in their growth by rubbing off the fresh green shoots with the thumb or, once they start to lignify, use secateurs before they get too woody. With seed-raised specimens, any shoots from the base can be retained and allowed to grow to form a multi-stemmed tree.

All *Sorbus* have a shallow root system and need a free-draining, acid to alkaline soil, but with some moisture, and will not tolerate their roots drying out. They prefer to be planted in cultivated ground, such as in a shrub or herbaceous border, where the roots zone is shaded, and they do not always approve of being planted as a single specimen in a lawn with fine turf where the tree roots cannot compete with compaction and constantly drying out.

I prefer to plant in groups of three or five where space permits as they lend themselves to companionship and look more natural in that setting. All *Sorbus* are subject to infection from a variety of pests and diseases, particularly fire blight (*Erwinia amylovora*), and to avoid infection be sure to buy from nurseries that are free from the disease and ensure that all your pruning tools are cleaned and sterilised between pruning individual trees. When pruning, always remove branches back to a strong lateral growth.

Where to buy and see

- **Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery**
  Annwell Lane, Smisby,
  Ashby-de-la-Zouch,
  Leicestershire LE65 2TA.
  Tel 01530 413700,
  bluebellnursery.com
- **Burncoose Nurseries**
  Gwennap, Redruth,
  Cornwall TR16 6BJ.
  Tel 01209 860316,
  burncoose.co.uk
- **Frank P Matthews**
  Berrington Court,
  Tenbury Wells,
  Worcestershire WR15 8TH.
  Tel 01584 812800,
  frankpmatthews.com
- **Hillier Nurseries**
  Ampfield House,
  Ampfield, Romsey,
  Hampshire SO51 9PA.
  Tel 01794 368733,
  hillier.co.uk
- **Landford Trees**
  Landford Lodge,
  Landford, Salisbury,
  Wiltshire SP5 2EH.
  Tel 01794 390808,
  landfordtrees.co.uk
- **Dawyck Botanic Garden**
  Stobo, Peebles,
  Peeblesshire EH45 9JU.
  Tel 01721 760254,
  rbge.org.uk
- **Ness Botanic Garden***
  University of Liverpool,
  Neston Road, Little
  Neston, Ness,
  Cheshire CH64 4AY.
  Tel 0151 795 6300,
  liverpool.ac.uk/ness-gardens
- **The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**
  Kew, Richmond,
  London TW9 3AE.
  Tel 020 8332 5655,
  kew.org
- **The Yorkshire Arboretum**
  Castle Howard,
  York YO60 7BY.
  Tel 01653 648598.
  yorkshirearboretum.org
- **Valley Gardens**
  The Crown Estate Windsor
  Great Park SL4 2HT.
  Tel 01753 860222,
  windsorgreatpark.co.uk

*National Collection holder.

When Martin and Nicola Henderson lost a third of their garden to a new open-plan extension, they saw it as an opportunity to transform the space and bring order, light and colour

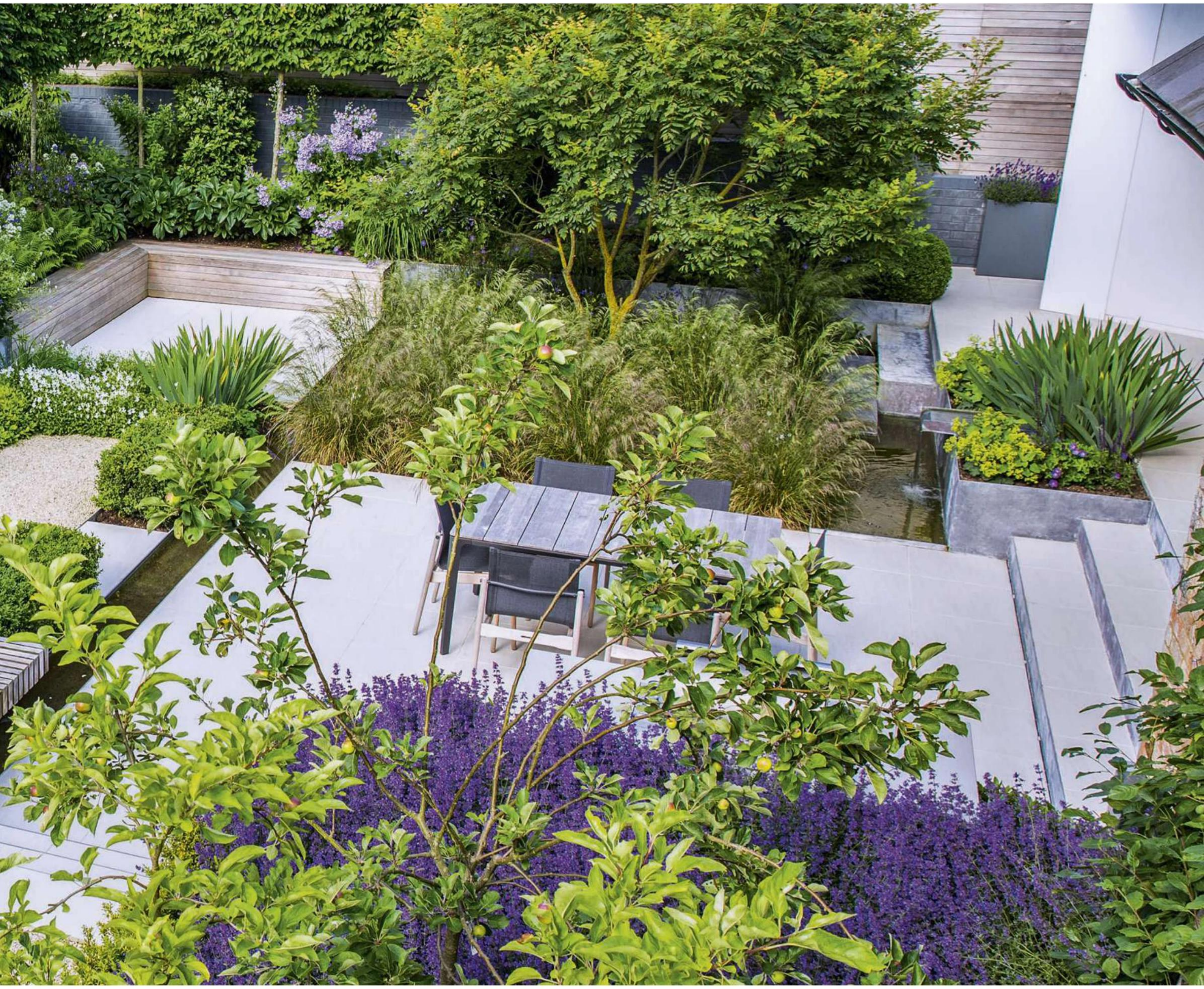
Better by design

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **RACHEL WARNE**

IN BRIEF

What Private family garden.
Where Hertfordshire.
Size 13m x 12m.
Soil Imported topsoil over solid chalk.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

With its pared down palette of green, lavender and white planting, and pale hard landscaping materials, this family garden has a restrained feel that complements the minimal, interior style of the Victorian home.



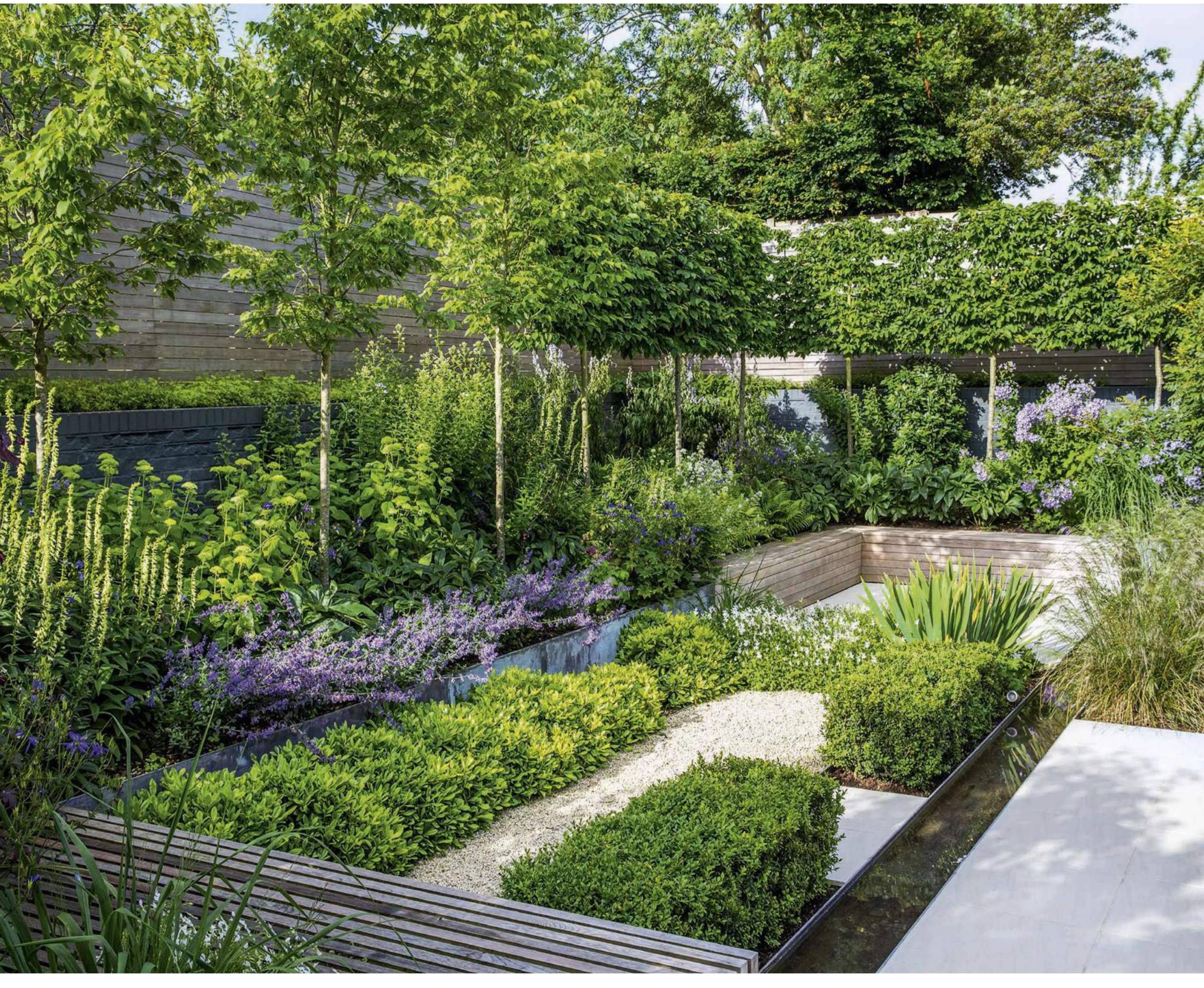
I have always wanted a rill," says Martin Henderson. "It was up there on the wish list when we had our garden redesigned."

In 2016, after seven years living in a converted Victorian pub, not far from the Essex town of Saffron Waldon, Martin and his wife Nicola commissioned a contemporary extension to accommodate their growing family and in the process lost a third of their garden to building work. It had high walls, conifers and banked borders sloping away from a shady central lawn. "We never saw the change as a problem," says Martin. "Instead it gave us an opportunity to do something completely different with quite a difficult space."

Today the overall impression is of order, light and colour. With the sliding glass doors of the sleek, new, open-plan family kitchen pushed back, there is a seamless link between house and garden. The same pale porcelain floor tiles have been used inside and out, the strong rectilinear design of the garden has been perfectly aligned with key architectural details on the extension, and Martin now has not one but two intersecting rills drawing his eye out to flower beds filled with bold swathes of perennials, clipped box and ornamental grasses.

This stunning garden is the work of award-winning designer Cassandra Crouch. As well as the water rill, the Hendersons' brief included a built-in kitchen and outdoor eating area, with clean lines and a strong structure balanced by lots of plants, and some way of softening the boundary walls. "There are more traditional garden areas wrapping the older parts of the house, but this section was specifically conceived as a contemporary, grown-up space to complement the extension," says Cassandra.

The awkward level changes became a driver for the design. The steps leading down from the house are now broad and shallow, giving them a sculptural impact that is enhanced by a steel water chute, slicing the space in two. The boundaries ▷



Design Ideas

Balance mass and void by softening a strong rectilinear design with plenty of plants. This design uses 40 per cent open space with 60 per cent planting.

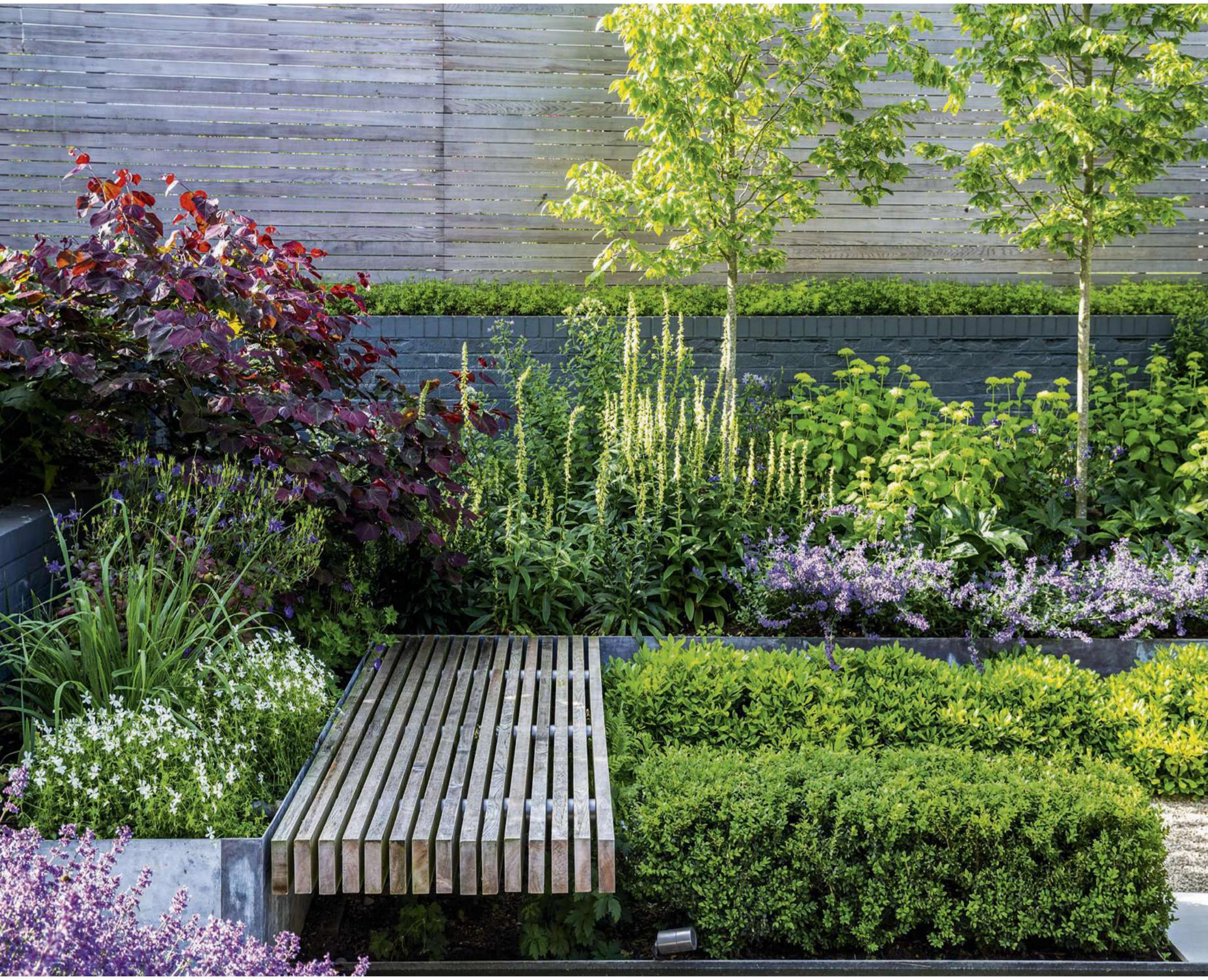
Limit the palette of materials to create a unified feel. Here, textural crushed limestone in the same colour as the exterior tiles is the only addition to the steel cladding and Western red cedar selected by the architect.

Perennials used en masse give a contemporary, structured feel. You don't necessarily have to use different plants, just plant them in a different way.

Detail is important in any design. Use specialist external contractors and fabricators who have experience of exterior landscaping.

Below left Boundary walls are hidden by a pleached hornbeam stilt hedge and feathered *Carpinus betulus* 'Frans Fontaine', in raised planters filled with pale spires of foxglove *Digitalis lutea*, the pompom flowers of *Hydrangea arborescens* and soft lavender-tinted *Campanula lactiflora* 'Mid Blue'. A ruff of catmint, *Nepeta* x *faassenii* 'Kit Cat', and *Geranium phaeum* soften the edges, tumbling down to a low hedge of *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum'.

Below right *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy', with its vibrant purple foliage, makes a glowing backdrop to the slatted day bed where all the Hendersons love to lounge. "We have a huge cushion for it," says Martin.



▷ have been faced with horizontally slatted trellis and are largely hidden by a hornbeam stilt hedge in raised beds filled with flowering perennials.

The open dining terrace is framed on one side by a sea of vivid violet-flowered *Nepeta* x *faassenii* 'Kit Cat' and on the other by a mass of *Deschampsia cespitosa*. Next to this a beautiful specimen *Koelreuteria paniculata* has been underplanted with a loose combination of woodland perennials chosen to withstand the shade it casts.

At the bottom of the garden, a second, semi-sunken terrace is surrounded by raised beds and built-in timber seating. From down here, settled on a slatted Western red cedar bench, you view the garden through a veil of plants. Turn to look back up at the house and you notice the steps are faced in a beautifully acid-etched steel that echoes the cantilevered steel canopy shading the top terrace. It is this attention to detail that makes every part of the garden sit so well together.

The raised beds are level with the top of the original sloped banks, creating borders that align with the base of the boundary walls. This gives a clean visual, and the imported top soil helped improve growing conditions within these beds.

Cassandra designed the raised beds, the steps, rill and water chute as an interconnecting series of steel boxes, which were manufactured in a workshop and literally slotted together on site. "We call it the Meccano garden, and it has worked tremendously well," she says.

"I asked for a garden that would complement the house, look good all year round and still change with the seasons," says Martin. "It has met the brief more completely than we could possibly have imagined." □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Cassandra's work at
contemporarygardendesign.co.uk

Below left An acid-etched steel chute cuts through a raised bed of *Iris* 'Jane Phillips' and *Alchemilla mollis*, pouring water into a shallow pool that feeds the two rills criss-crossing the garden.

Below centre There is a perfect balance between mass and void in this well-judged design. The wide dining terrace, with its built-in barbecue kitchen, is softened by a sea of ornamental grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* beneath a *Koelreuteria paniculata* tree and backed by a swathe of rich purple catmint.

Below right Raised beds are a practical way to minimise the impact of the boundary walls while retaining a useful depth of new topsoil. Western red cedar slats double as seating.

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

JAKE HOBSON

The founder of Japanese tool company Niwaki on the art of cloud pruning, the intersection of nature and artifice, and helping to make Britain's gardens safer places

WORDS AMBRA EDWARDS PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

For 30 years, Jake Hobson has lived and breathed Japan. It's not just that his wife is Japanese and that he has mastered the Japanese language, he has also absorbed its craft traditions, and has schooled himself in one of its most definitive and universal art forms –*niwaki* – the art of pruning and shaping trees. And in bringing *niwaki* to Europe (his version of *niwaki*, he hastens to say, which isn't at all the real thing) he has done his utmost to stay true to its spirit.

Jake's love affair with Japan began when he was an art student in London, studying sculpture at the Slade. One of his house mates was Japanese and – along with her different take on life – her stories of *hanami*, the annual celebration of the cherry blossom, fired his imagination. So when, in his final year, he won a travel bursary, he set off for Japan to see it for himself. Visiting parks and gardens in pursuit of blossom, he was increasingly struck by the forms of the trees – clearly shaped by hand, yet in a way that seemed to distil their essential form rather than subverting it. He was enthralled by this intersection of nature and artifice, the very ground he was exploring in his sculpture. "A tree well pruned can express more than a tree can express naturally," says Jake. He draws a parallel with the manga comics popular in Japan. "Sometimes you'll see more expression in a simple line drawing of a face than you can see in a real face, even in a film."

I WANTED TO DO AMAZING JAPANESE PINE TREE PROJECTS, BUT EVERYONE WANTED CLOUD BOX HEDGES

Determined to return to Japan, Jake trained as a TEFL teacher, which allowed him to spend a year in Tokyo before finding work in a tree nursery near Osaka. Here he set about learning the traditional skills of *niwaki* – not just pruning and sculpting, but bending and tying, lifting and rootballing, and the brutal decapitation of sturdy trees, sometimes 50 years old. It was at the top of a ladder, surrounded by podocarpus trees on a balmy October evening, that he decided his future. "I thought to myself, I would really like to have a nursery like this in England. So I came back, and I started growing trees. But very soon I ran into this problem that it does take a long, long time for trees to grow."

Jake took a job at Architectural Plants in Sussex, where for the next five years he honed his pruning skills on the nursery stock, and finally came to understand how he could translate the essence of what he had learned without using Japanese plants, or even trying to create specifically Japanese effects. "Finally the penny dropped that *niwaki* was nothing to do with where the plant came from, and everything to do with what you were thinking and what you did." In 2000, the cloud-pruned trees and billowing box hedges in *Gardens Illustrated*'s winning garden at Chelsea took the horticultural world by storm: suddenly everyone wanted what Jake had started calling 'organic topiary'. He had been doing some pruning for friends, and bringing back authentic tools, unavailable in Britain, from his visits to Japan. Unable to continue at Architectural Plants because of a back injury, the time came, in 2006, to turn these hobbies into a business. Starting out, as he did, "with no money and no customers", pruning was a lifeline. "What I really wanted to do were amazing Japanese pine tree projects," he says. "But what everyone else wanted was organic cloud box hedges, so that's what I did for the next five years."

He also wrote a very successful book, and began to teach the principles of *niwaki*. But although he is widely regarded as the great innovator in this style of topiary, he is adamant that he has done nothing new: the Belgian designer Jacques Wirtz, he points out, was planting cloud hedges back in the early 1970s.

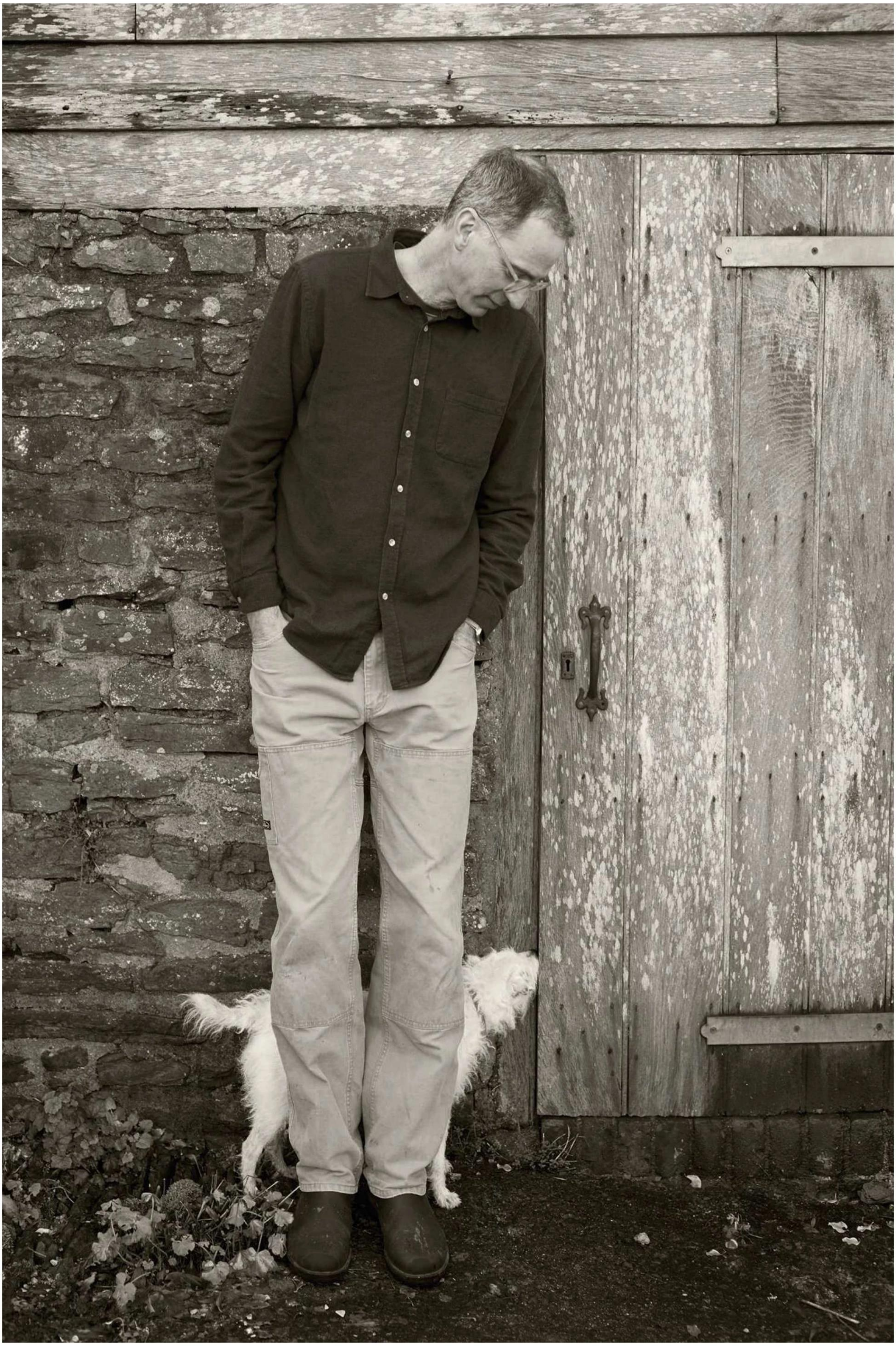
"It's not topiary itself that changes, so much as how you use it," observes Jake, pointing to the trend for "big organic shapes in wild meadow settings", as at Great Dixter, and to the cloud-pruned trees now sold by florists.

"I hate seeing the misappropriation of Japanese style," he says. "With Pinterest and Instagram, it's so easy these days to pick up ideas without understanding them." It upsets him that European nurseries have started copying Japanese trees – less because the detail is invariably wrong than because of how they are used. "The underlying purpose is to make an ornament, a decoration. And that is completely NOT why Japanese trees are grown. They are microcosms of the wider landscape; they always remain trees."

At 48, Jake still has a rather boyish, Tiggerish enthusiasm for all things Japanese, but his focus has moved on to selling beautiful tools from Japan, discovering the same reverent craftsmanship in blacksmithing that he found in horticulture. "I'd say my work on the Niwaki business is much more useful to people than my clever pruning skills. If I'm remembered for anything, it won't be organic topiary, but for bringing the tripod ladder to the UK. At least I'll have made the garden a safer place." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

For more information on Niwaki tools and courses visit **niwaki.com**



This image From its home in Bedfordshire, Primrose Hall Nursery offers a huge range of rare and collectable peonies, including herbaceous, tree and intersectional peonies, and is starting the first British peony breeding programme.

Facing page Among Primrose Hall's most-prized peonies are the rare and highly collectable intersectional, or Itoh, peonies, which include the stunning *Paeonia* 'Hillary' with its fragrant, semi-double raspberry and apricot rosette flowers that turn cream as it matures.

Enduring love

At Primrose Hall Nursery Alec White specialises in breeding rare and desirable intersectional peonies – plants that can last for 100 years

WORDS **ALYS FOWLER** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Alec White can remember the exact moment when it was he fell head over heels in love with peonies. He'd just left his career as a lawyer, bought a bedding plant nursery and was trying his hand at growing a whole suite of perennials, working out where his milieu would be in this new world. "I can remember walking across the nursery thinking what is that flower?" he explains. "It had command of the whole nursery, it was head and shoulders above everything else." And just like that Alec had found his love.

It starts, he says, with anticipation. "There is a real occasion with a peony coming into flower. Those buds heralding something quite spectacular. In six weeks, they go from nothing to over three-foot-tall, and then those decadent, over-the-top flowers, so full of scent. They are sensational; they bombard your senses."

Twelve years later and his Primrose Hall Nursery has more than 280 cultivars in production, holds the National Collection of Intersectional Peonies and a coveted shiny gold medal from the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. He also has the beginnings of Britain's first peony breeding programme, which he says is a complicated business. "Peony seeds need to go through a double vernalisation," he explains. "Then you need to wait another five years to see if the flower is worth anything. Then you've got to bulk it up, either the slow way of dividing every two years or the short cut of tissue culture. I'll be lucky to get anything in my own life time." But we all know what love will drive you to do.

Peonies are decadent things that come with a price tag. You may have heard how early intersectional peonies originally changed hands for £70,000 although now that has come down to a £60 bargain, but Alec has a few sought-after intersectionals that change hands for £500. Herbaceous and tree peonies are much more reasonably priced and particularly when you consider that they can last from 40 to 50 years or sometimes even longer. "There are varieties that last over 100 years," he says. "And with peonies, as long as you get establishing right, they just get better every year."

Peonies may look high maintenance with those blousy blooms, but Alec is evangelical that they are truly the opposite. "All peonies are really low maintenance, if you get three things right," he says. "First, it is all about the right plant. You need to buy an establish plant that will flower and you can't tell from the top growth, it's about what's happening below." Herbaceous and intersectional peonies won't flower until they are five years old, tree peonies take at least seven to eight years. "Once they are established, they'll look after themselves, with you having to do very little. They don't get eaten by slugs or snails, or rabbits or deer. They'll grow in any reasonable soil. I think you could drive a tank over an established one," he says.

They need a sunny spot in any reasonable garden soil, but that soil does need to be free draining. "If it's sandy or thin, then feed once a year with well-rotted manure," advises Alec. What is critical, however, is getting the planting depth right. "They must be planted at the correct depth," Alec explains. "The crown doesn't want to be any more than 5cm below the ground because it needs to get cold in winter. It has to have a good eight weeks below 15°C to flower well." For tree peonies, Alec recommends planting so that the graft union is 10-15cm below the surface, this will force the graft to send out roots and make a stronger plant.

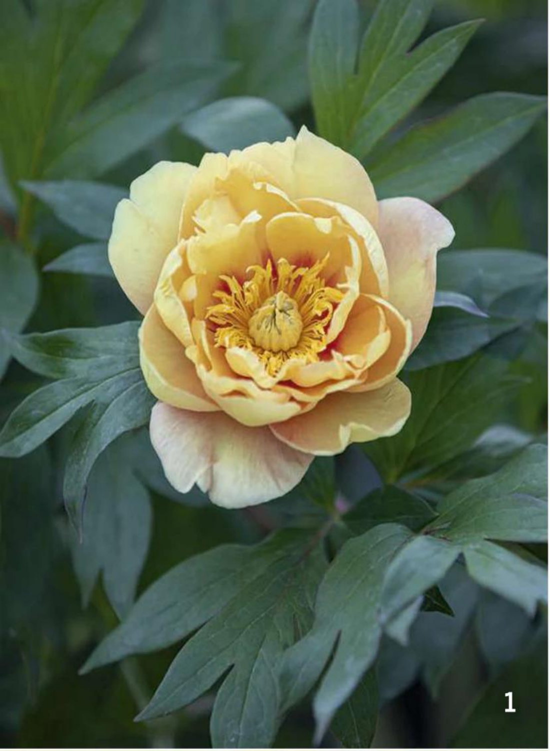
Herbaceous peonies will need staking and this really needs to be done by May as they tend to rocket out the ground and it's hard to stake gracefully come June. Intersectional peonies, however, have no need for staking, which is one of their many benefits. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Primrose Hall, Nursery at Dingley Dell, Toddington Road, Westoning, Bedfordshire MK45 5AH.
Tel 01525 878924. **Web** primrosehallpeonies.co.uk

How to grow intersectional peonies

Also known as Itoh peonies after the Japanese breeder Toichi Itoh who created the first cross in the 1940s, intersectional peonies are cross between herbaceous and tree peonies. The idea being that you get the best of the both worlds, massive fragrant flowerheads that sit above the finely cut foliage, typical of tree peonies, but with the compact growth habit of an herbaceous peony. They tend to grow 60-90cm tall and are tough things more tolerant of cold weather than a tree peony, but not fazed by heat either. On top of that, Alec says they have incredible autumn foliage: "You get these greens, oranges and burgundies in such rich hues; herbaceous peonies just don't colour up in the same way." You also get between 40 and 50 flowers on mature plants and the flowers will last twice as long as ordinary peonies. "They go on for four to five weeks, with lots of small side buds and they are so fragrant too." They're also versatile, being as happy in a big pot as in the border. They are rare, beautiful blooms that are complicated to breed and that is reflected in the price tag, but take care of them at the beginning and for years to come you will have something to marvel at every summer.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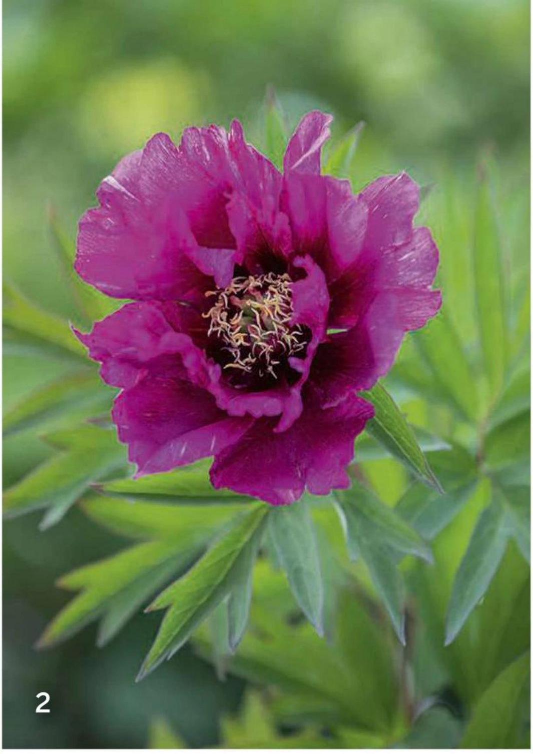
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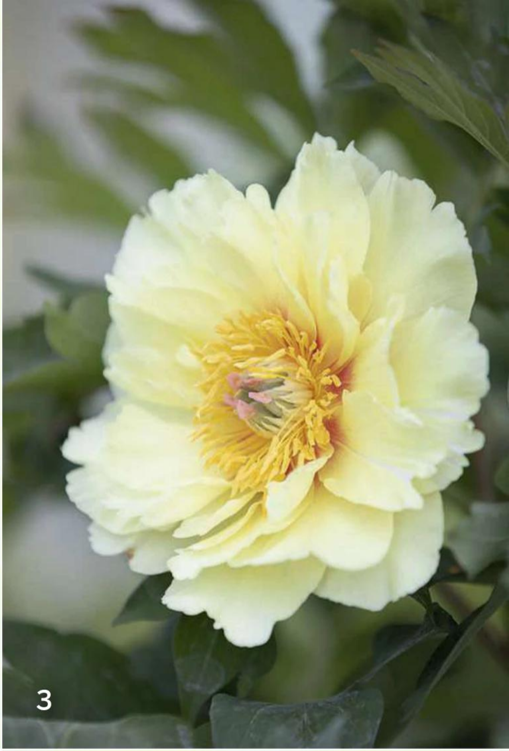
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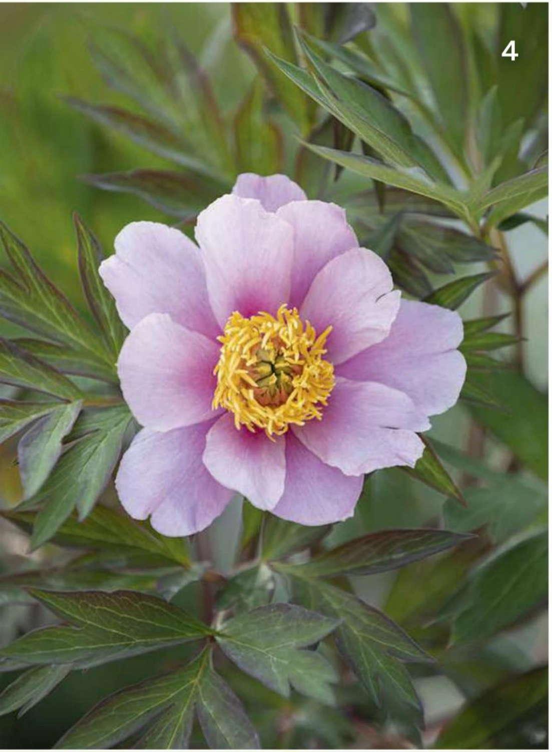
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17 intersectional peonies

1 *Paeonia* **'Sonoma Sun'** Has single, yellow flowers with a red heart that fade away to reveal a clear, yellow flower, like a good sun rise. Mid-season flowering. 85cm.

2 ***P.*** **'Morning Lilac'** An intersectional peony with semi double, strong purple flowers that have darker edges. Also provides good autumn foliage colour. Mid-season. 75cm.

3 ***P.*** **'Sonoma Welcome'** Has single flowers that open apricot, but then fade to yellow, and are brushed with light-red flares.Mid-season. 80cm.

4 ***P.*** **'Sonoma Opal'** Peony with single, bubble-gum pink flowers that fade to the outer edges with a buttercup-yellow centre. Mid-season. 75cm.

5 ***P.*** **'Watermelon Wine'** Has dark, raspberry-pink flowers with a dark wine centre. Semi-double with golden anther. Mid-season. 90cm.

6 ***P.*** **'Sonoma Yedo'** Very double, extreme perhaps, yellow flowers that are known for their long blooming period. Early mid-season. 70cm.

7 ***P.*** **'Sonoma Rosy Future'** Single flowers that have dark-rose petals with flares of a darker rose. Unusually, the petals are notched. Mid-season. 1m.

8 ***P.*** **'Love Affair'** A semi-double, white flower (there aren't many whites among the intersectionals) with a good vigour and easy flowering. Early mid-season. 70cm.

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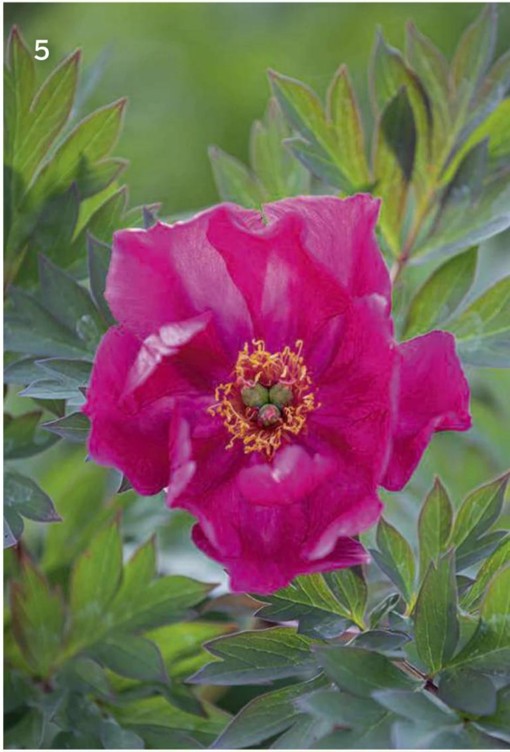
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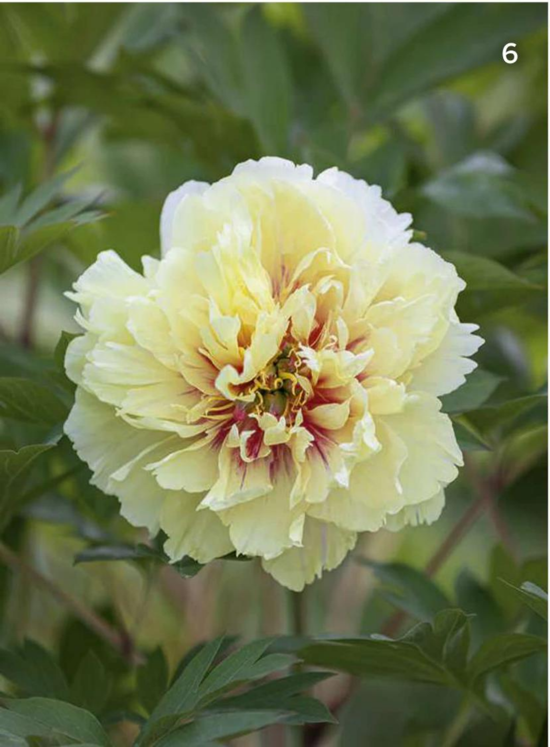
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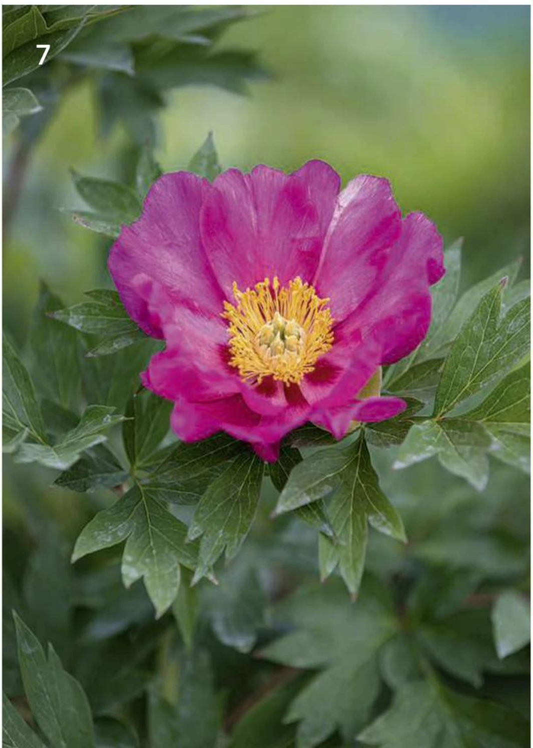
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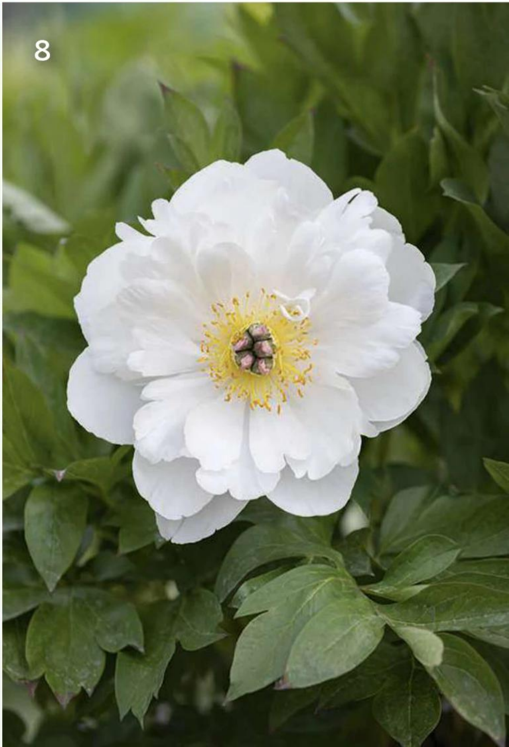
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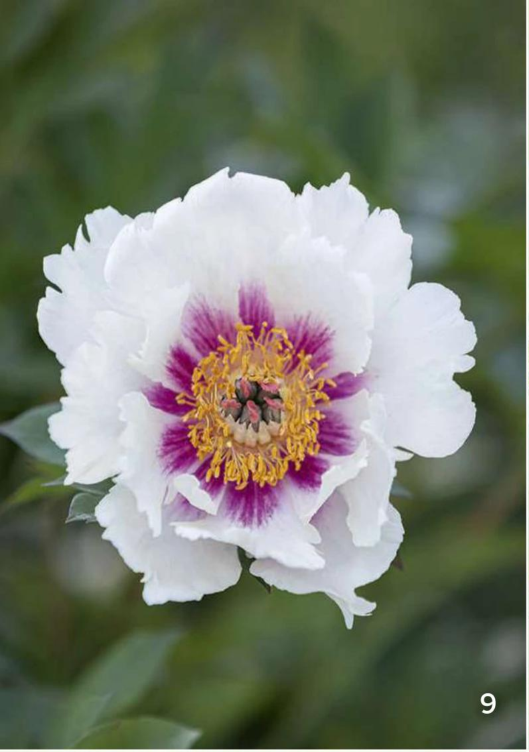
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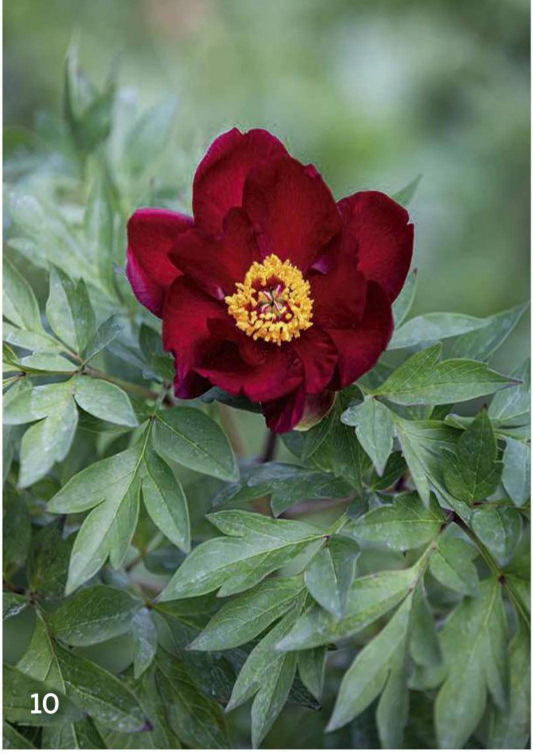
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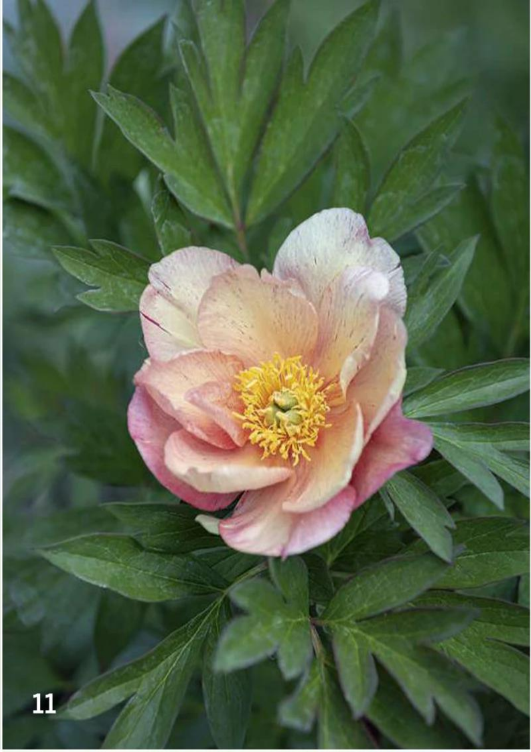
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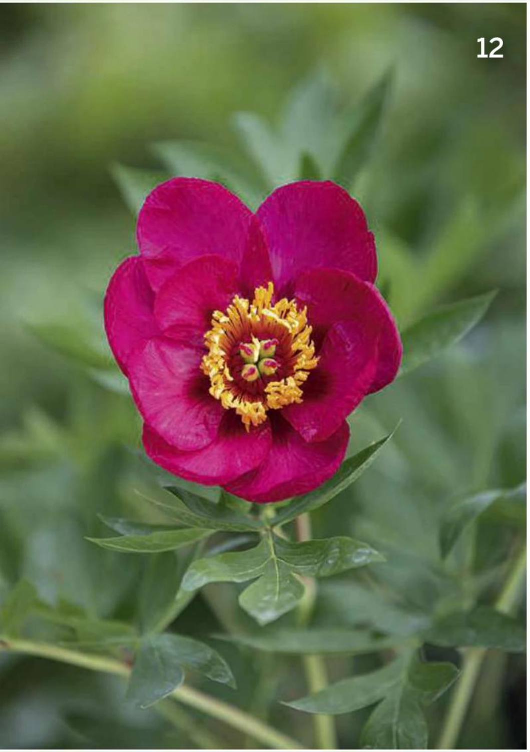
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17 intersectional peonies (continued)

9 *P.* Queen of Hearts A very rare intersectional peony that at £499 will steal your wallet as well as your heart. Dreamy semi-double, creamy flowers with a raspberry centre and golden anthers. Mid-season. 75cm.

10 *P.* 'Sonoma Velvet Ruby' Offers large, single, deep wine-red flowers and finely cut green foliage that turns red in autumn. Mid-season. 75cm.

11 *P.* 'Singing in the Rain' An Intersectional peony with delicate, romantic, semi-double flowers in coral pink with pale lemon anthers. 75cm.

12 *P.* 'Tolomeo No. 59' A loose, semi-double with dusky, ruby-red flowers produced over a long period. Mid-season. 1m.

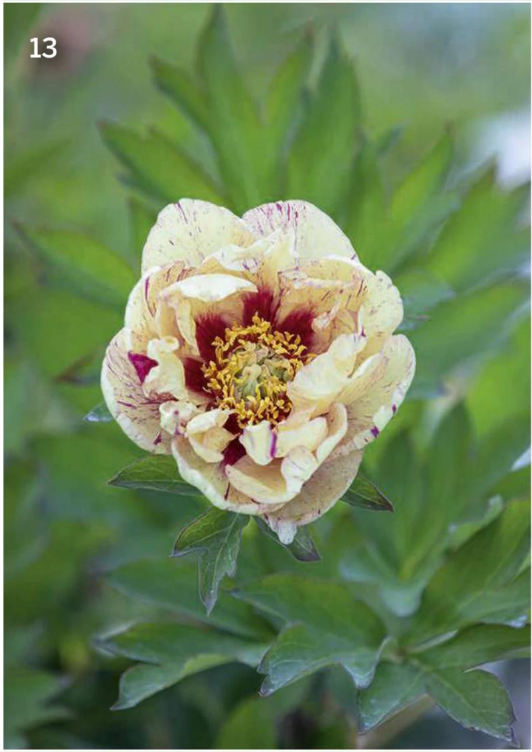
13 *P.* 'Lollipop' Striking, with apricot, double flowers that have flecks of purple and a subtle scent. The finely cut foliage turns a lovely red in autumn. Mid-season. 75cm.

14 *P.* 'Sonoma Halo' A fully double, yellow-flowered peony that has so many petals you can't see its raspberry-red centre. Mid-season. 75cm.

15 *P.* 'Julia Rose' Deep-cerise flowers that fade to raspberry and eventually cream. It has finely cut foliage that turns red in spring and autumn. Mid-season. 75cm.

16 *P.* 'Cora Louise' Large, scented, pink flowers with a lavender edge and red, purple flares. Its finely cut foliage turns red in spring and autumn. Mid-season. 90cm.

Most intersectional peonies have a hardiness rating of RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.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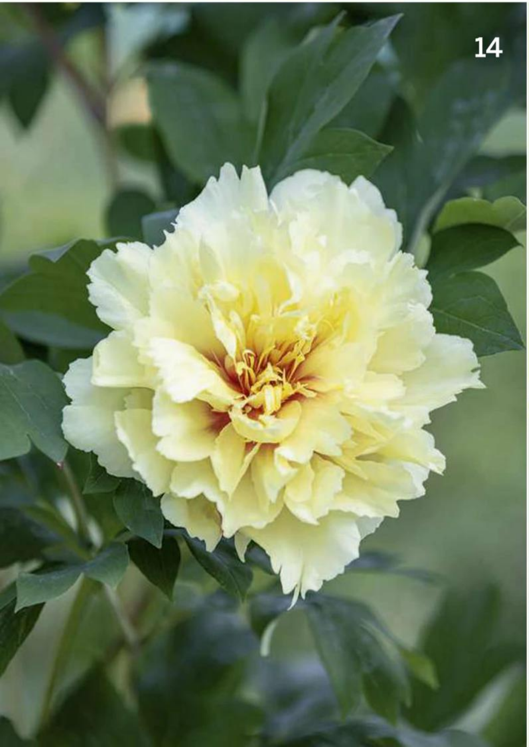
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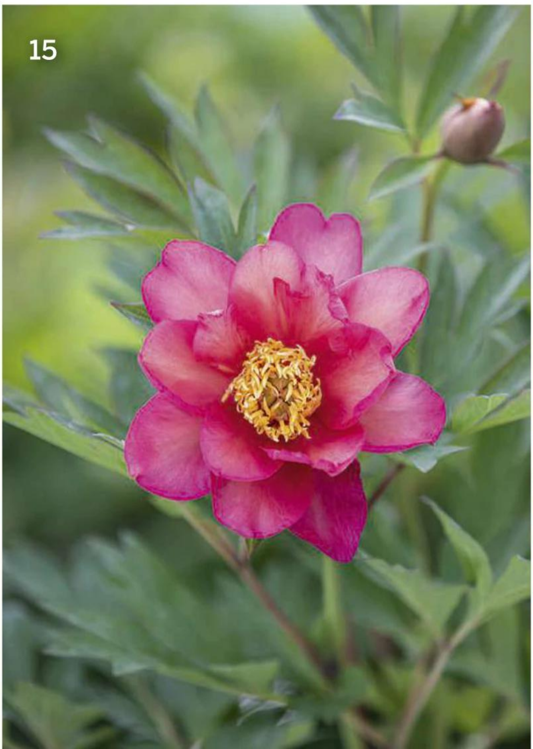
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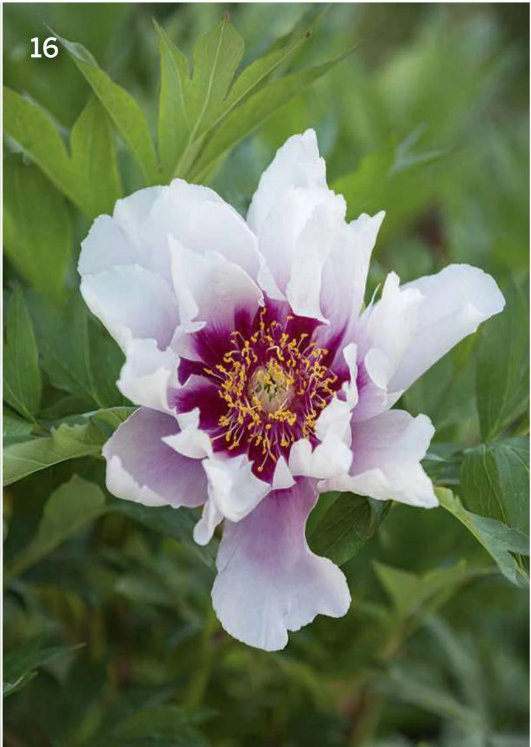
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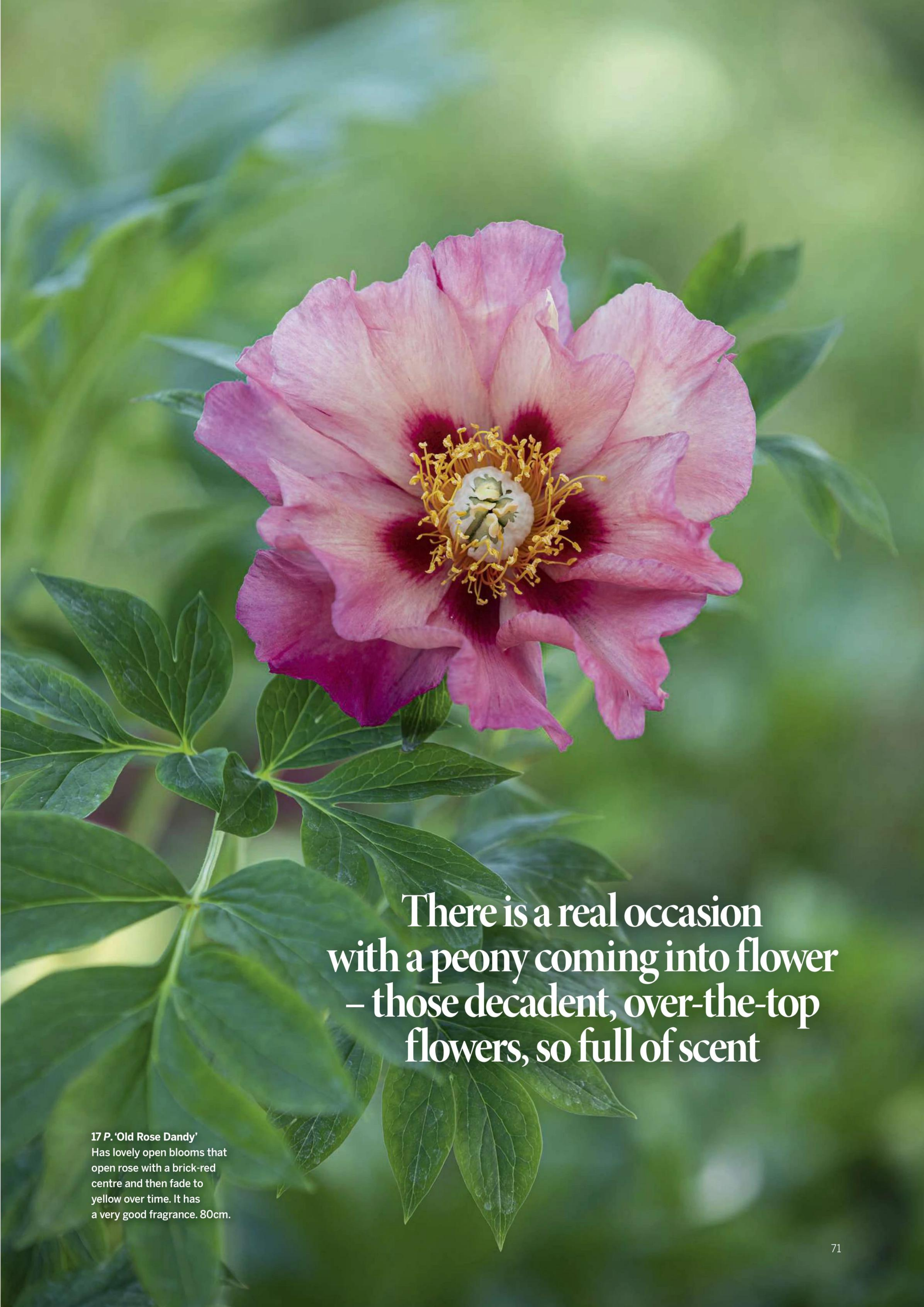


There is a real occasion with a peony coming into flower – those decadent, over-the-top flowers, so full of scent

17 *P.* 'Old Rose Dandy'
Has lovely open blooms that open rose with a brick-red centre and then fade to yellow over time. It has a very good fragrance. 80cm.

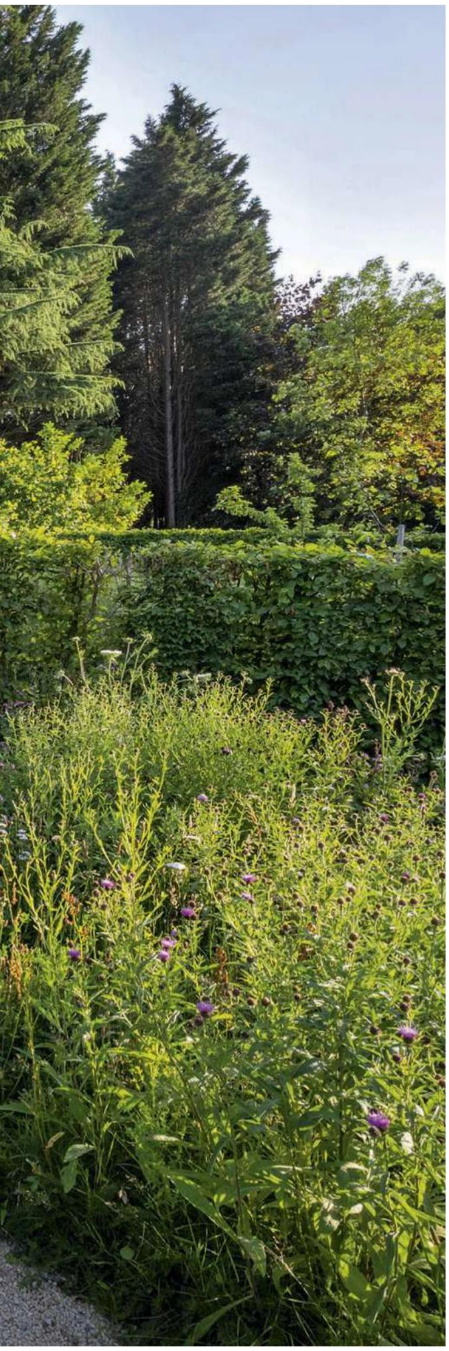
IN BRIEF

Name Omved Gardens.
What Community garden.
Where North London.
Size Three acres.
Soil Ideal sloping sight with a mix of Bagshot sand and London clay, fed by natural springs.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

Nourishing the city

In a corner of north London, a group of committed food lovers have transformed a former garden centre into a diverse eco habitat with a wildflower meadow, orchard and vegetable garden

WORDS KENDRA WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS



When Petersham Nurseries opened its doors 16 years ago it was a strange concept, going to the outskirts of London just for lunch. Yes, there were plants for sale in a magical setting but it was really the just-picked produce, grown near the glasshouse where it was cooked and served, that people were talking about. Similarly, when a young Arthur Potts Dawson opened his restaurant Acorn House in central London a couple of years later, and composted his leftovers on the roof, it was a bit… unusual. And yet both ventures were wildly popular.

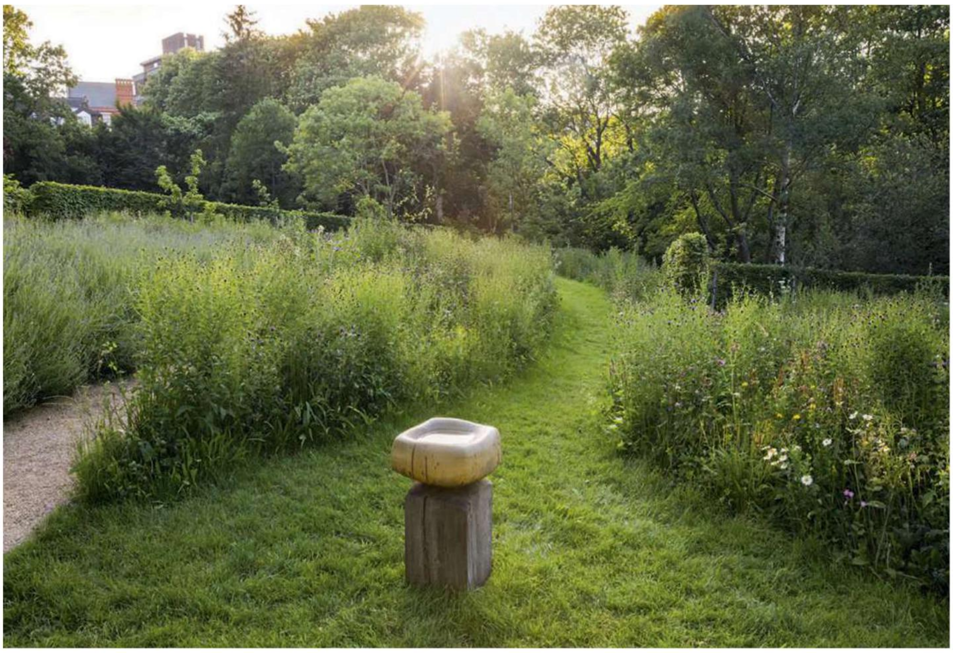
Here's another strange idea: a three-acre garden behind a busy high street in north London into which the owners want to invite you for a conversation about food. Omved Gardens in Highgate is almost a secret garden, though not for the local group who campaigned to stop developers acquiring the land, and it's becoming known to a growing number of people interested in the holistic and nutritional properties of plants. For the owners, who are involved with the World Food Programme, it is an outdoor lab, a meeting place and a manifestation of their ideas around food production and waste. In other words, it's a conceptual garden.

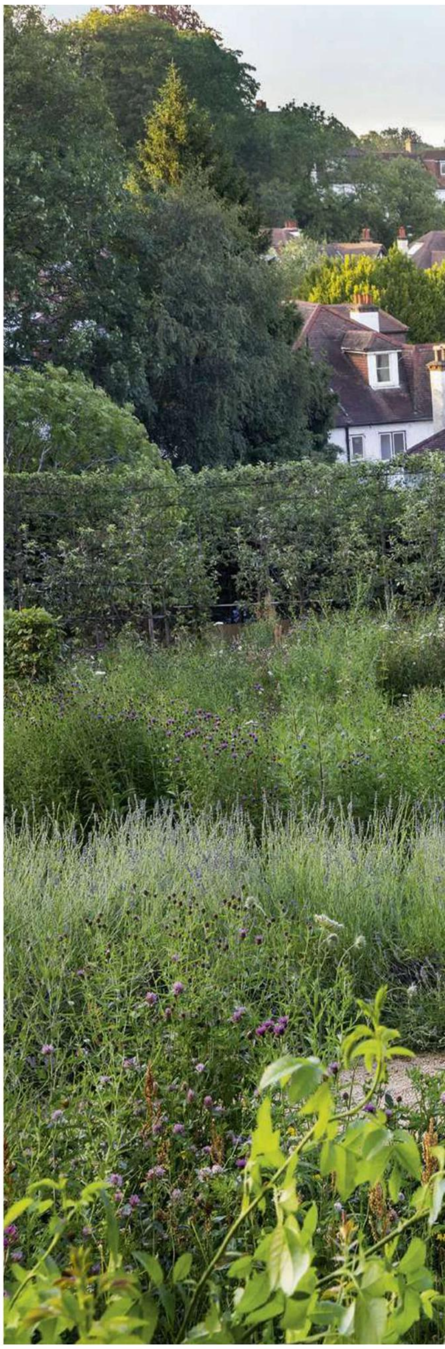
To this end, the appointment of landscape architects del Buono Gazerwitz makes perfect sense. The owners Karen and Lekhu Leason had already got to know Paul Gazerwitz ▷

Above left Glasshouses, which used to be the main staging area for the garden centre that previously occupied the site, have been turned into an events space. The initial planting palette focussed on wildflowers, to bring life and healing into the space, and these, in turn, are used for workshops based on herbal medicine.

Above top Wide paths spread out from the glasshouses; their curves contrasting with the utilitarian structures. *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walkers Low' attracts pollinating insects, while grass paths are mown through wildflowers so visitors can stray from the gravelled path.

Above bottom Extra gathering space by the glasshouses is sheltered with roof-trained white mulberries (*Morus alba* fruitless) – a type of green shelter that has become one of del Buono Gazerwitz's signature design elements. The blackened oak seats are by Chris Nangle.





Above top Several sculptures, all made by artist Sarah Walton, provide a motif around the garden. For her bird baths, Sarah makes forms that are full, "as though they have taken a breath." They are salt-glazed ceramic, on plinths of weathered oak.

Above bottom In the kitchen garden a Dutch dessert apple (*Malus domestica* 'Notarisappel') has been trained in an unusual U-shape. "I wanted to use some traditional elements of a kitchen garden, such as pleached and espaliered trees, in a more contemporary and informal way to express a continuity with the past," says designer Paul Gazerwitz.

▷ when he designed their roof terrace, and they turned to him again when they acquired the undesignated green space known as Highgate Bowl. For centuries it had been used for market gardens and grazing pasture, and more recently was used as a garden centre and contractor's yard that had contributed a great deal of hard paving and other non-green things.

"My initial idea was to put in lots of wildflowers," says Paul. "I wanted the land to start breathing again, and to become the green, open space that it should be." And this is the surprise, after navigating a long alley just off the clanging and banging of Highgate High Street you find yourself in this semi-wild, other-worldly place, with views through trees over the city. The green hit is energising: "Every time I come here I feel better," says Paul. "It's an antidote to modern life and all the stresses associated with it."

Near the entrance, is a series of restored glasshouses. They are smartly utilitarian in style and function, and last year they won the RIBA London Award for HASA architects. At the two entrances, the del Buono Gazerwitz design begins, with a path meandering like a tightly bending river, born out of a "squiggle" made by Paul after his initial visit.

The squiggle sets the tone for natural planting but also serves a practical purpose, in creating gentle ramps for access. The planting palette too is dictated by productivity as well as good looks. Along with a thousand plugs of wildflowers, weeds, such as burdock and dandelion, are valued as ingredients for tinctures and balms used in workshops at Omved.

> I wanted the land to become the green, open space it should be. Every time I come here I feel better. It's an antidote to modern life

An orchard and kitchen garden, enclosed with pleached apples and supporting fan-trained plums, cherries, peaches and nectarines are intended as a larder for lunches and dinners. "Over the past three years the gardens have grown," says Paul. "What happens next at Omved will help to inform me what the landscape should facilitate."

Themed suppers focus on aspects of food production and waste, for instance best-before-date ingredients that would otherwise be binned. It is little surprise that Omved's resident chef is Arthur Potts Dawson, he of the roof composters. Arthur helped to create the Chef's Manifesto, an offspring of the WFP that highlights the responsibility of chefs in the food chain, a conversation that is made less abstract in the physical hub that is Omved Gardens.

The project is one third finished, having rushed to meet its first deadline of opening for the Chelsea Fringe Festival in 2017. The garden is not a business, and it benefits from the luxury of time. Initially mystified by their oblique communications, the local press dubbed the owners 'poetic' and it was a prescient description; Omved has no hidden agenda. Like all good visionaries, Paul's clients are allowing those with expertise to push their ideas forward. "They are there for the ride," he says, "but they are happy to take a back seat." □

Above Planting is contained between paths that bend like rivers, inviting visitors to wander around the garden at a leisurely pace. Pleached apples (*Malus domestica* 'Sterappel') form a northern boundary to the kitchen garden, over which Highgate Village can be seen as a community of rooftops.

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Omved Gardens at **omvedgardens.com**

Not every influential gardener wins gold at Chelsea, many more are transforming urban spaces and lives through community garden projects, proving all it takes is a packet of seeds, plenty of imagination and a determination to succeed – no matter what

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON

Unsung Heroes

1 Chris Evans

In 2003 Chris began using his family nursery in Cheltenham as a base to nurture people with Down's syndrome, autism and mental-health or addiction issues. The Butterfly Garden, as it is now known, is now used entirely for therapeutic, educational and recreational ends. "We're not mechanised, sterilised or sanitised," says Chris, but there is no doubt it works. **thebutterflygarden.org**

2 Linda Philips

Kew-trained Linda set up Roots and Shoots in south London in 1982, when the concept of community gardening was still a bit hippyish. The idea was, and is, to provide training for disadvantaged young people, and over the decades hundreds have benefited. It's not just a horticultural education, but a way of honing social skills. As Linda puts it: "We grow plants and we grow people." **rootsandshoots.org.uk**

3 Caroline Bousfield Gregory

Caroline began guerilla-gardening the huge circular plot next to east London's Victoria Park known as the 'magic roundabout' in 2002. She's still there though she now pays £5 a year for the privilege. "I try to have things in flower all year and encourage plants that look after themselves and self-seed," says Caroline. "I've never put any signs up, but if anyone is curious to know who looks after the roundabout, they only have to ask a local shopkeeper." **carolinebousfield.co.uk**

4 Karen Liebreich

Led by Karen, Abundance London has been reconnecting people with nature from its base in west London for the past ten years. It began as a group of volunteers harvesting fruit gluts from street trees and on waste land. "Gradually the volunteer team started to guerrilla garden abandoned corners, and then to improve the public realm with a mixture of art and planting," says Karen. **abundancelondon.com**

5 Richard Reynolds

The global champion of guerilla gardening (and author of the standard book on the subject), Richard began greening spaces in the streets around his home in south London in 2004. His work led to confrontations with local authorities but caught the imagination of many others. Richard has now relocated to Totnes in Devon and continues the work there: "I've upgraded a grass verge into a seasonal pictorial meadow and renovated a primary school's playground learning beds," he says. **guerrillagardening.org**

6 Marie and Brian Murray

In 2010 Marie and Brian established one of the most successful community gardens, Dalston Eastern Curve, along a disused stretch of railway track in east London from where they convene a vibrant programme of events. The garden's café-bar and pizza oven help fund garden and craft workshops aimed at children and the local community. **dalstongarden.org**

7 Mary McHugh

A key volunteer with the annual Chelsea Fringe Festival since its inception in 2012, Mary is now its beating heart and the first point of contact for many of those hoping to organise a project from community gardeners to local historians. Why does she do it? "I think one of the main reasons we all love working on the Fringe is because it's a tiny bit bonkers," she says. **chelseafringe.com**

8 Mak Gilchrist

Mak's quirky community-garden project began when she and neighbour Will Sandy mobilised local residents to turn a large expanse of pavement by a bus stop into a garden. The Edible Bus Stop was a huge hit and the project has expanded to take in tiny 'parks' in former London Underground ticket-office windows and an Edible Avenue in south London. Mak says: "The aim is for our schemes is to have an inclusive design and where possible, to grow edibles as well as ornamental plants." **theediblebusstop.org**

9 Mary Clear

Co-founder with Pamela Warhurst of Incredible Edible, Mary remains at the helm of this remarkable local food-growing initiative. The original idea was to grow food in private and public spaces across the town of Todmorden in Lancashire, and it really caught the imagination with new vegetable beds popping up everywhere. The idea has now spread to towns and cities around the world. **incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk**

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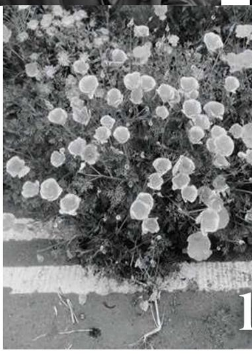
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2 MARC HANKINS, 4 ISABEL INFANTES, 6 ISABEL INFANTES, 10 JUSTINE STODDART, 11 JUSTINE STODDART, 13 JOHN MANNELL, 14 PHOTOFUSION/SHUTTERSTOCK

10 Naomi Schillinger

Professional gardener Naomi co-founded the Blackstock Triangle Gardens Project in north London with its emphasis on food-growing in front gardens. The scheme now has more than 200 local participants. Regular get-togethers known as 'Cake Sundays' are held throughout summer, with local roads closed off and a carnival atmosphere. During lockdown the project distributed free seeds and compost bags to locals who do not have gardens: "We gave away seeds for climbing beans and squashes, and herbs and salad mixes for those who only have window boxes to grow in," says Naomi. **outofmyshed.co.uk**

11 Alex Laird

A medical herbalist who works within mainstream medicine, Alex runs the UK's first herbal clinic in hospital dermatology at Whipps Cross University Hospital in east London. She is also one of the co-founders of the strictly evidence-based Living Medicine project, which has helped spearhead research and education in this area, encouraging GP surgeries to develop kitchen gardens and teach patients how to use the foods as medicine. During the lockdown, Living Medicine ran online sessions including maternity self-care using foods and herbs. **livingmedicine.org**

12 John Little

This inspirational landscape architect is the man behind the project known as the Poppy Estate in Clapton, east London, where over the past 18 years residents have created a wide array of food-growing plots. "Planting grapes vines up the railings was probably our most popular move," John says. "After a few teething problems trying to convince residents the food was there for them, and they definitely could pick it, this initiative is really working." **grassroofcompany.co.uk**

13 Will Sandy

Will, who collaborated with Mak Gilchrist on the Edible Bus Stop, runs his own landscape-design practice, where the emphasis is firmly on community and urban projects. His most recent scheme, a pack-away, secure cube that opens up to form a community hub for gardeners, made its debut in Caracas, Venezuela last year. **design.britishcouncil.org**

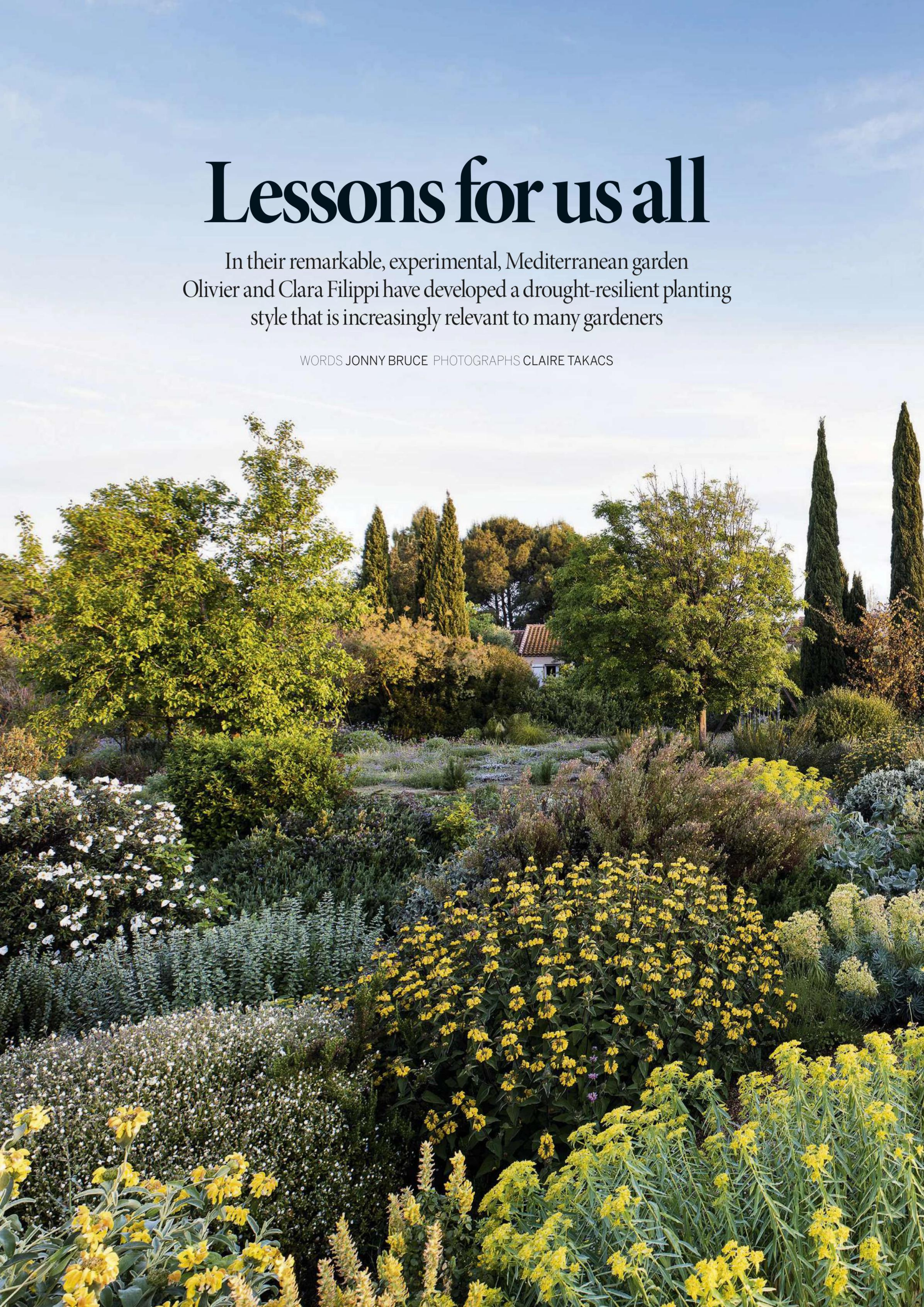
14 Lutfun Hussain

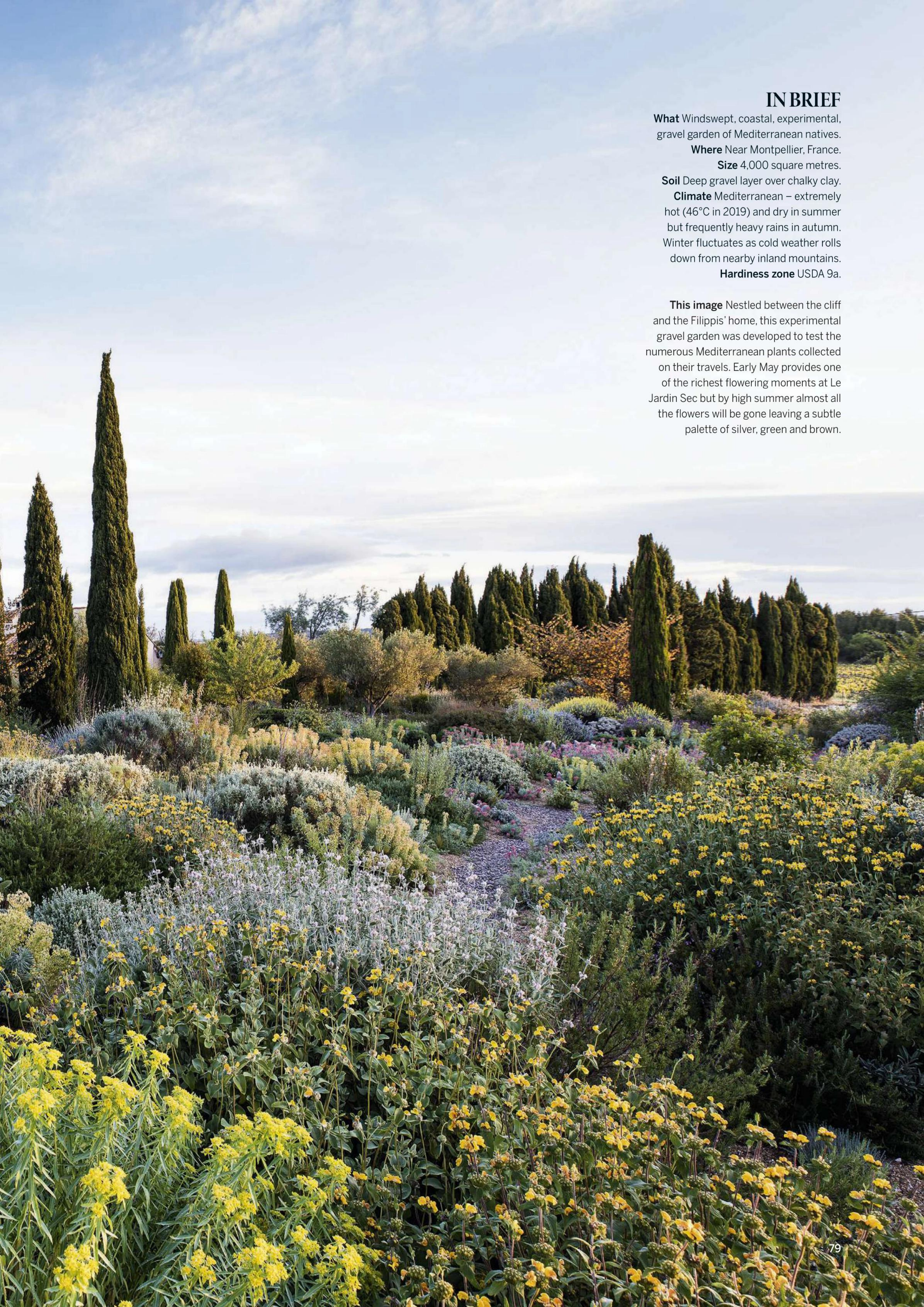
An advertisement for volunteers first brought Lutfun to Spitalfields City Farm in east London in 1999. She soon found herself setting up the Coriander Club – part social club, part gardening enterprise, growing many of the vegetables that bring a taste of home to the local Bengali community, including huge bottle gourds, mooli radish, black kale, beans, chillies, spinach and, of course, coriander. **spitalfieldscityfarm.org**

Lessons for us all

In their remarkable, experimental, Mediterranean garden Olivier and Clara Filippi have developed a drought-resilient planting style that is increasingly relevant to many gardeners

WORDS JONNY BRUCE PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS





IN BRIEF

What Windswept, coastal, experimental, gravel garden of Mediterranean natives.
Where Near Montpellier, France.
Size 4,000 square metres.
Soil Deep gravel layer over chalky clay.
Climate Mediterranean – extremely hot (46°C in 2019) and dry in summer but frequently heavy rains in autumn. Winter fluctuates as cold weather rolls down from nearby inland mountains.
Hardiness zone USDA 9a.

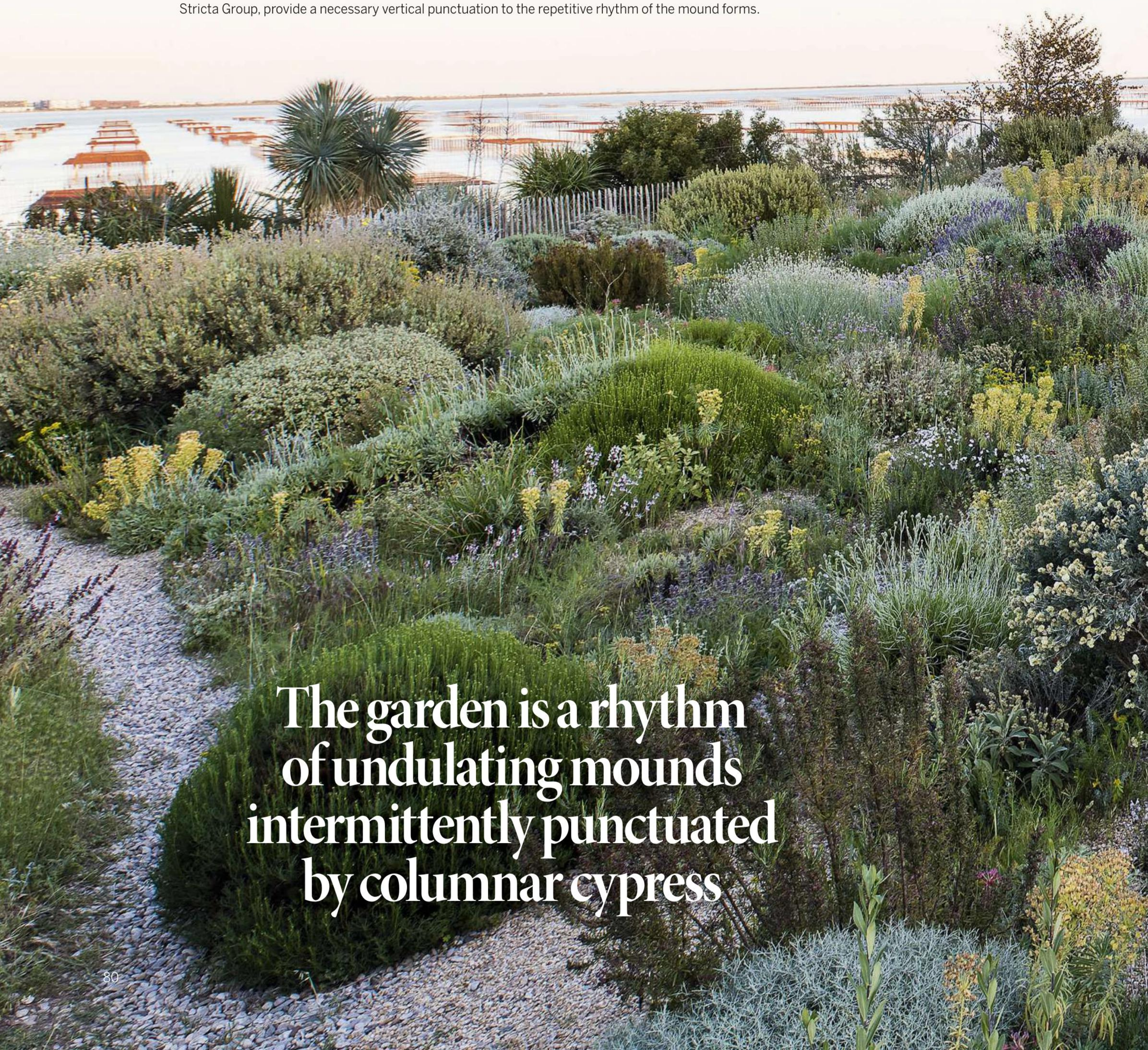
This image Nestled between the cliff and the Filippis' home, this experimental gravel garden was developed to test the numerous Mediterranean plants collected on their travels. Early May provides one of the richest flowering moments at Le Jardin Sec but by high summer almost all the flowers will be gone leaving a subtle palette of silver, green and brown.

On a windswept site overlooking the lagoons that make up the Étang du Thau near Montpellier, Olivier and Clara Filippi have created a remarkable and experimental garden of Mediterranean native plants. When the pair set up a nursery here in 1990, it was a brave undertaking considering their lack of formal horticultural training but Olivier suggests it was their lack of experience that gave them the confidence to believe "that everything was possible". As their nursery Pépinière Filippi flourished Olivier and Clara developed their experimental garden to test the thousands of wild plants they collected on their travels.

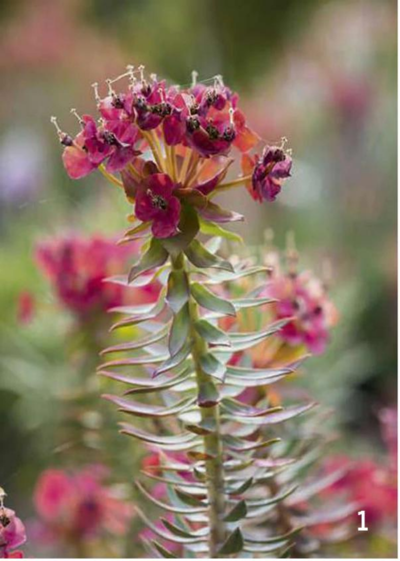
Sandwiched between the Filippis' home and the cliff's edge, this 4,000 square metre garden may have a commanding view of the lagoon but it suffers exposure to the ravages of salt winds – not to mention the unbearable heat and drought of summer. The underlying soil is an alkaline clay that cracks in summer and is waterlogged during the frequent heavy rain events in late autumn and winter. Many would consider this an unlikely spot to create a garden but it is precisely these extreme conditions with which the Filippis wish to test their plants. In order to adapt the site and provide necessary drainage they created mounded gravel beds and designed paths that doubled as rivulets to carry flood water away. However, it is the plants that have led the design, in an approach akin to the concept of influential French designer Gilles Clément's Le Jardin en Mouvement, where plants self-seed and the competitive interactions between species allow for a community that is in a gentle but constant state of flux.

A principal benefit of this style of garden is its relative low maintenance, particularly in terms of weeding. A combination of the deep (6-8cm) gravel layer, the extreme heat and drought, and finally the allelopathic properties ▷

This image A complex tapestry of texture and form evokes the garrigue landscape as the eye travels out across the oyster farms that are a feature of the series of lagoons that make up the Étang du Thau. Tall, upright Italian cypresses, *Cupressus sempervirens* Stricta Group, provide a necessary vertical punctuation to the repetitive rhythm of the mound forms.



> The garden is a rhythm of undulating mounds intermittently punctuated by columnar cypress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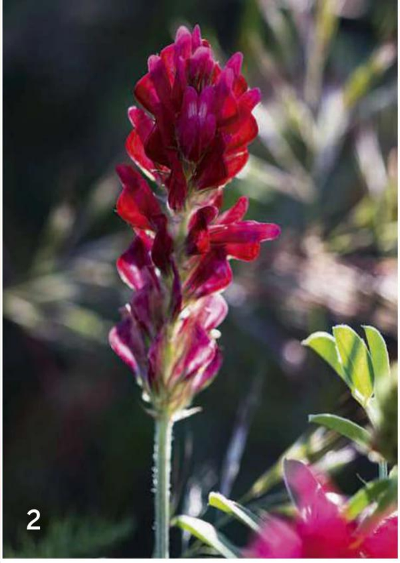
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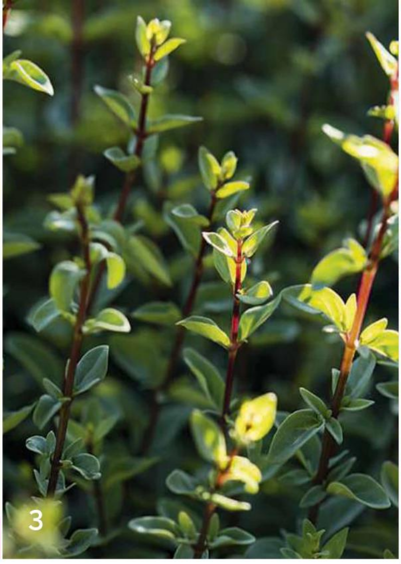
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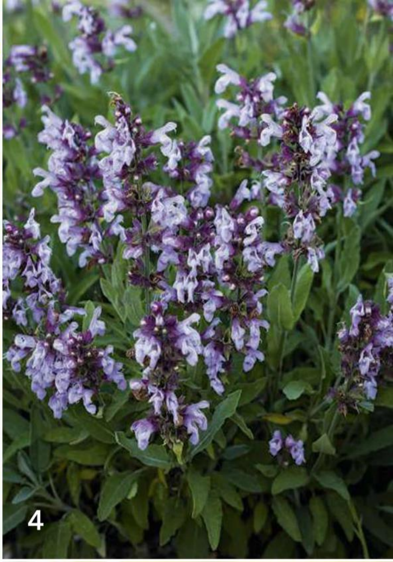
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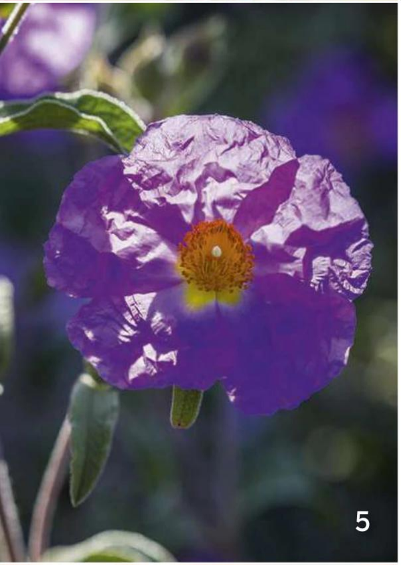
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12 KEY JARDIN SEC PLANTS

1 ***Euphorbia rigida*** An evergreen spurge with silver-blue leaves, arranged in regular spirals. Spectacular, bright-yellow flowers, from January to April, take on pink hues followed by intense red in May to June. Needs well-drained soil in full sun. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 7a-10b†.

2 ***Hedysarum coronarium*** Sometimes known as French honeysuckle, this robust perennial is able to fix nitrogen and survive in very poor soils. Clover-like foliage covered with downy hairs is topped with fragrant racemes of bright reddish flowers. 90cm. RHS H5.

3 ***Myrsine africana*** This compact evergreen shrub has small leaves and provides an important structural foil to the more floriferous and ephemeral plants in the Filippis' garden. Slow growing, but a tough plant that can cope with chalky soil and salt spray. 2m. RHS H4.

4 ***Salvia* 'Mas de Lunès'** A hybrid between *S. officinalis* and *S. fruticosa* with aromatic, felty green, foliage, which in April and May bursts with a profusion of pale-mauve flowers. Handles seaside winds and freely drained chalky soils. Short lived on richer soils. 80cm. RHS H5.

5 ***Cistus* x *purpureus* f. *holorhodos*** A compact shrub with narrow, dark-green foliage and dark fuchsia-purple flowers produced in April and May. Its sticky emerging shoots have allelopathic properties that suppress weed germination at the base of the plant. 1.2m.

6 ***Phlomis purpurea*** An easy and beautiful phlomis that is ideal for poor, well-drained soils and which Olivier describes as having "unfailing value" for its allelopathic properties. It needs excellent drainage, but offers perfect pale-pink flowers. 1.2m. RHS H4.

7 ***Salvia multicaulis*** This unusual salvia forms low clumps of grey-green aromatic foliage with lavender-purple flower spikes, that begin in March but fade to leave the dramatic purple calyces that in Olivier's words is, for a few weeks, "the most spectacular plant" in the Filippis' garden. 40cm. AGM. RHS H3.

8 ***Stipa gigantea*** Native to the western Mediterranean, this perennial grass is justifiably popular for its long flower stems that stretch up between April and June before turning gold and persisting until December. Will self-seed on stony soil. 2m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 5a-10b.

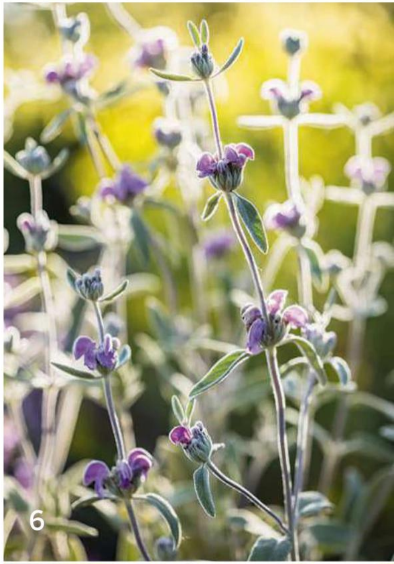
9 ***Catananche caerulea*** An adaptable perennial produces dense clusters of thin stems topped with masses of delicate blue flowers. These blooms emerge from an equally ornamental papery bract marked with a distinctive dark stripe. 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-7b.

10 ***Salvia fruticosa*** Sometimes sold as *S. triloba* this salvia produces masses of pale, purple-pink flowers in March and April over a rounded mass of aromatic foliage. Copes well with salt spray but requires perfect drainage. 1m. RHS H4.

11 ***Euphorbia ceratocarpa*** Early in spring a rush of light green foliage emerges each leaf marked with a white stripe and an attractive red flush to the stems. Acid-green to yellow flowers from April to July. Can handle chalky soils and free-draining ground. 1m. AGM. RHS H4.

12 ***Centaurea bella*** This seemingly modest, silver-leaved perennial is one of the best plants for a low groundcover. Quickly forms a dense mat of foliage from which pale-pink cornflower-type blooms emerge on slender stems from March to May. 35cm.

***Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.**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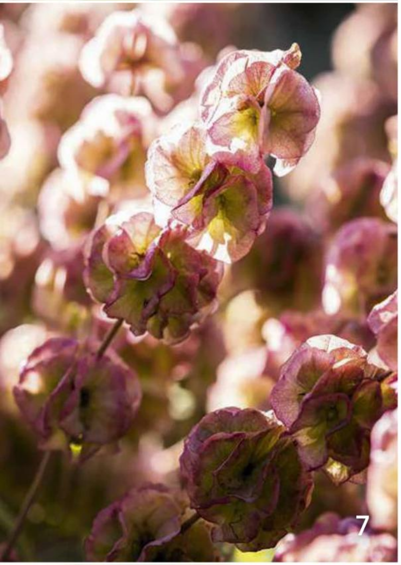
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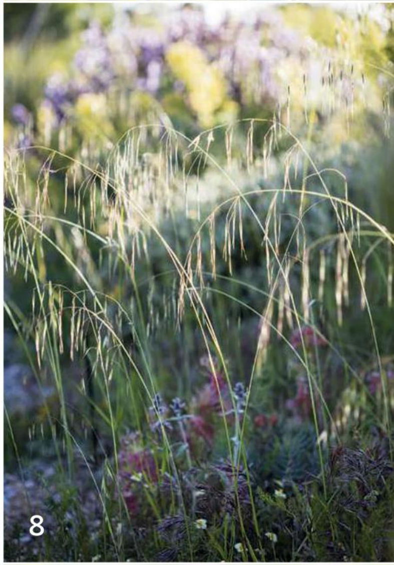
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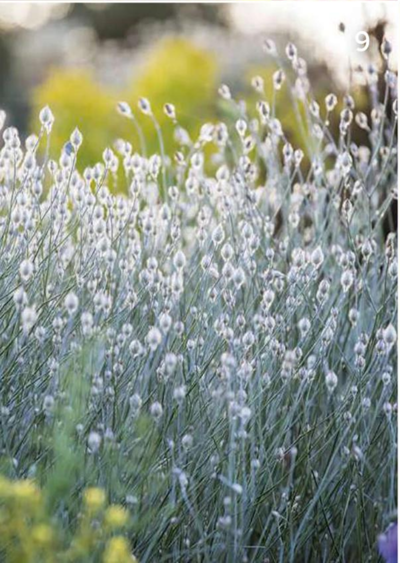
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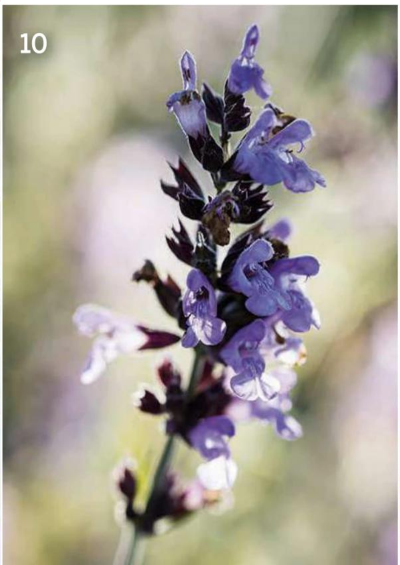
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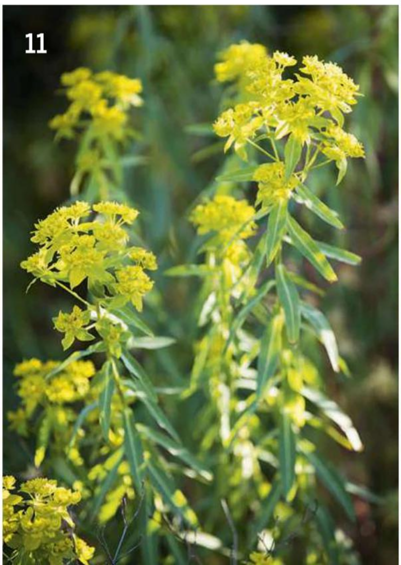
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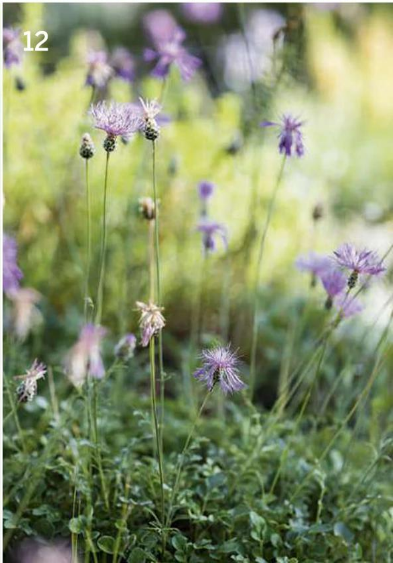
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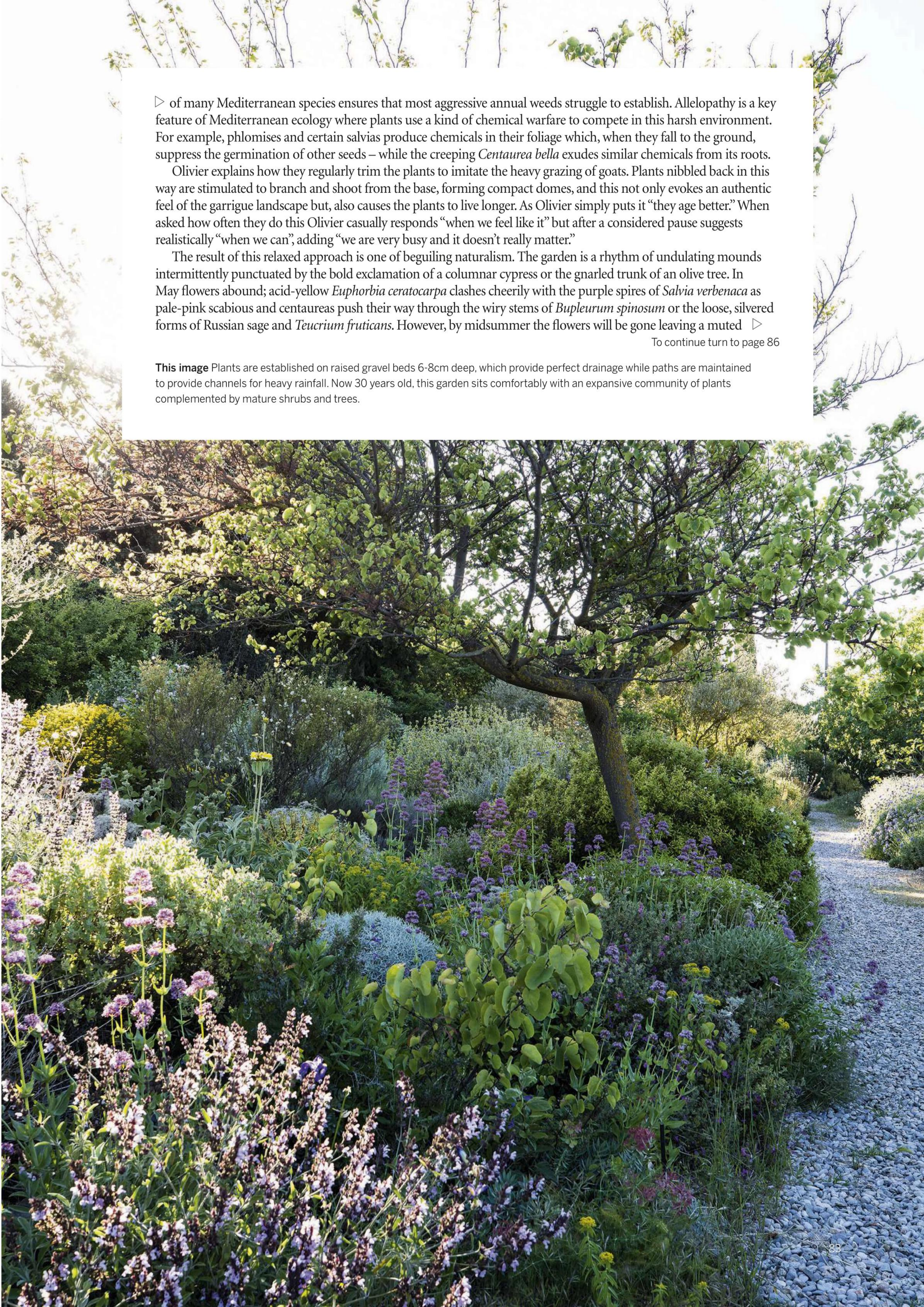
▷ of many Mediterranean species ensures that most aggressive annual weeds struggle to establish. Allelopathy is a key feature of Mediterranean ecology where plants use a kind of chemical warfare to compete in this harsh environment. For example, phlomises and certain salvias produce chemicals in their foliage which, when they fall to the ground, suppress the germination of other seeds – while the creeping *Centaurea bella* exudes similar chemicals from its roots.

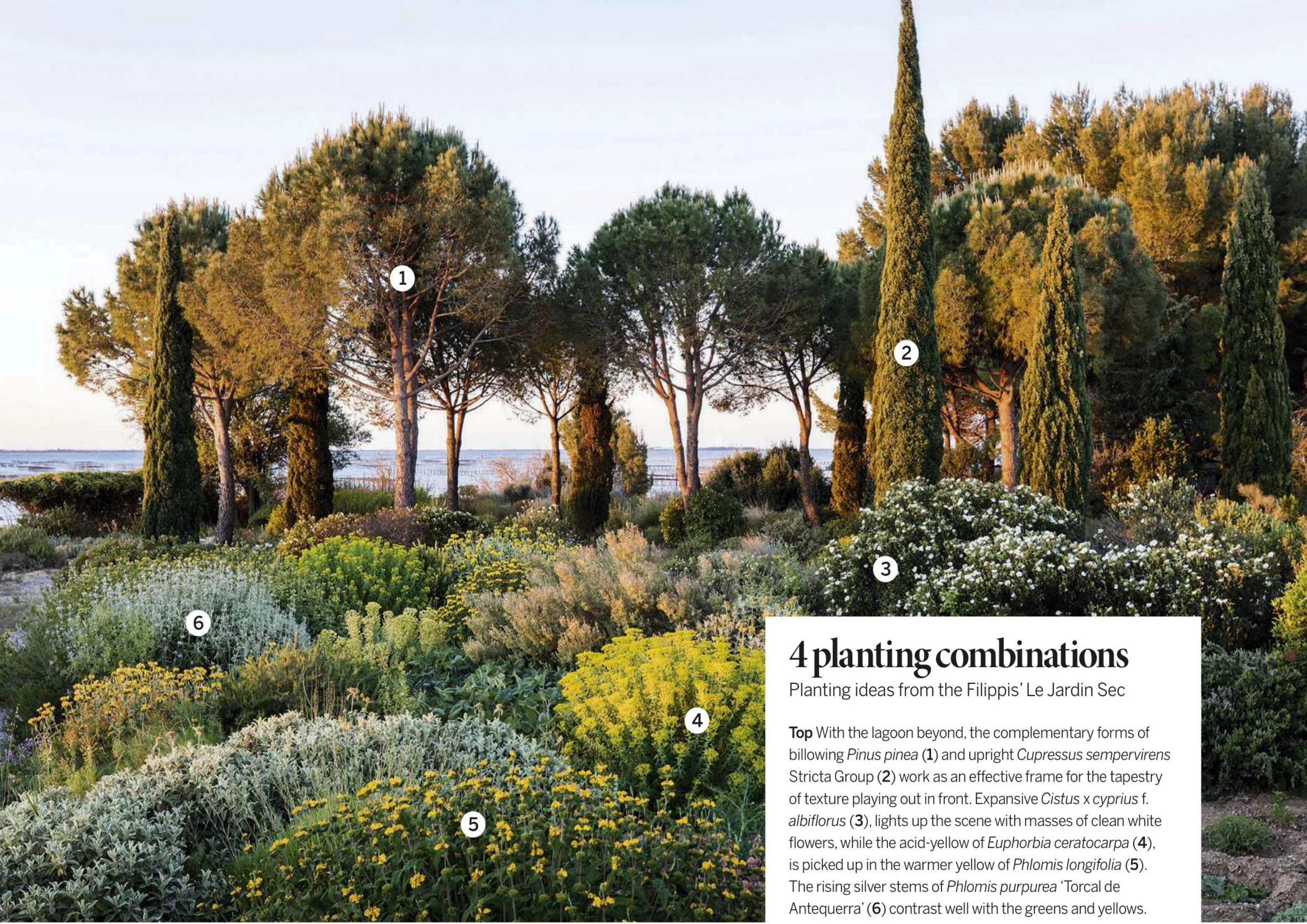
Olivier explains how they regularly trim the plants to imitate the heavy grazing of goats. Plants nibbled back in this way are stimulated to branch and shoot from the base, forming compact domes, and this not only evokes an authentic feel of the garrigue landscape but, also causes the plants to live longer. As Olivier simply puts it "they age better." When asked how often they do this Olivier casually responds "when we feel like it" but after a considered pause suggests realistically "when we can", adding "we are very busy and it doesn't really matter."

The result of this relaxed approach is one of beguiling naturalism. The garden is a rhythm of undulating mounds intermittently punctuated by the bold exclamation of a columnar cypress or the gnarled trunk of an olive tree. In May flowers abound; acid-yellow *Euphorbia ceratocarpa* clashes cheerily with the purple spires of *Salvia verbenaca* as pale-pink scabious and centaureas push their way through the wiry stems of *Bupleurum spinosum* or the loose, silvered forms of Russian sage and *Teucrium fruticans*. However, by midsummer the flowers will be gone leaving a muted ▷

To continue turn to page 86



This image Plants are established on raised gravel beds 6-8cm deep, which provide perfect drainage while paths are maintained to provide channels for heavy rainfall. Now 30 years old, this garden sits comfortably with an expansive community of plants complemented by mature shrubs and trees.

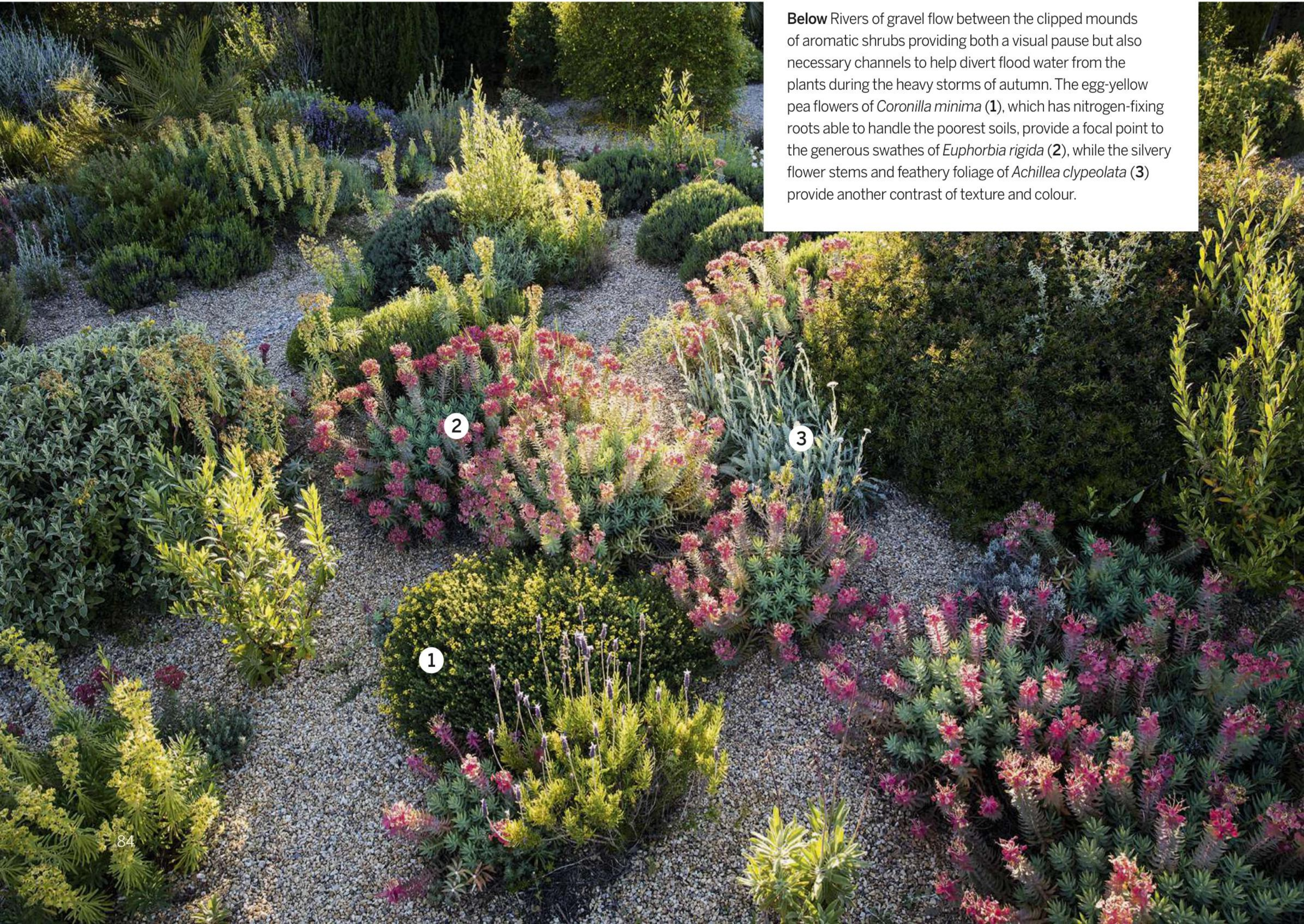


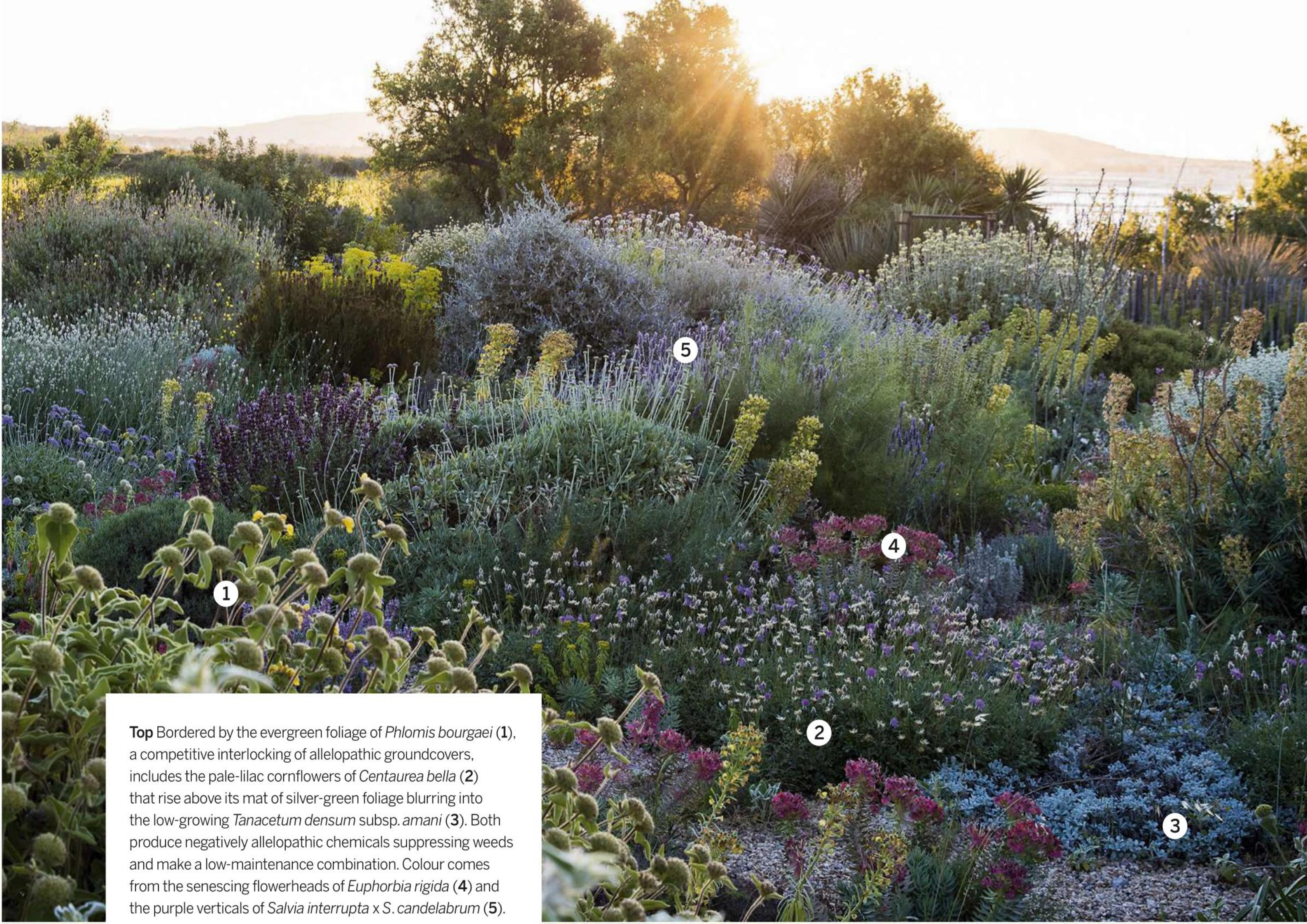
4 planting combinations

Planting ideas from the Filippis' Le Jardin Sec

Top With the lagoon beyond, the complementary forms of billowing *Pinus pinea* (**1**) and upright *Cupressus sempervirens* Stricta Group (**2**) work as an effective frame for the tapestry of texture playing out in front. Expansive *Cistus* x *cyprius* f. *albiflorus* (**3**), lights up the scene with masses of clean white flowers, while the acid-yellow of *Euphorbia ceratocarpa* (**4**), is picked up in the warmer yellow of *Phlomis longifolia* (**5**). The rising silver stems of *Phlomis purpurea* 'Torcal de Antequerra' (**6**) contrast well with the greens and yellows.

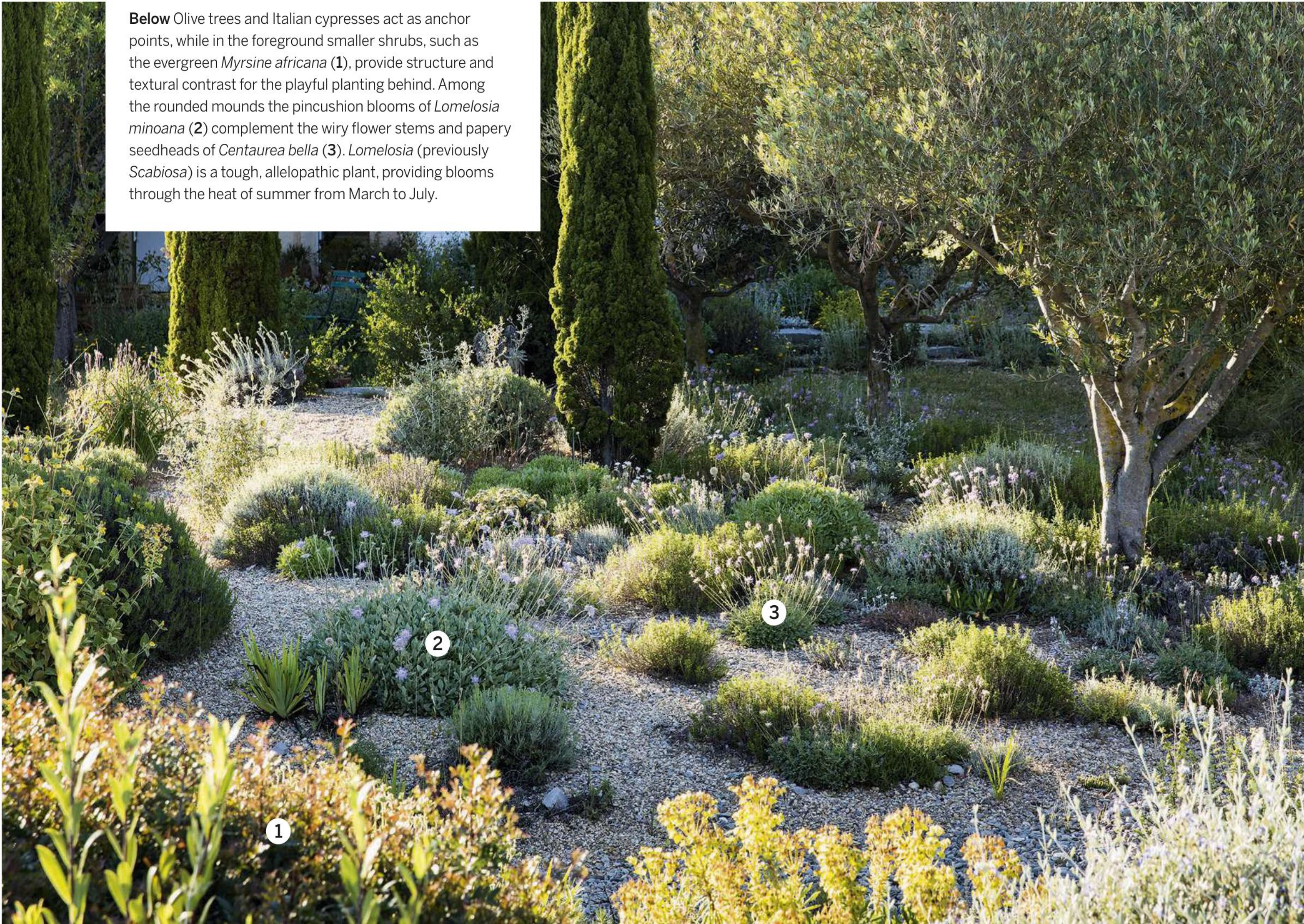
Below Rivers of gravel flow between the clipped mounds of aromatic shrubs providing both a visual pause but also necessary channels to help divert flood water from the plants during the heavy storms of autumn. The egg-yellow pea flowers of *Coronilla minima* (**1**), which has nitrogen-fixing roots able to handle the poorest soils, provide a focal point to the generous swathes of *Euphorbia rigida* (**2**), while the silvery flower stems and feathery foliage of *Achillea clypeolata* (**3**) provide another contrast of texture and colour.





Top Bordered by the evergreen foliage of *Phlomis bourgaei* (**1**), a competitive interlocking of allelopathic groundcovers, includes the pale-lilac cornflowers of *Centaurea bella* (**2**) that rise above its mat of silver-green foliage blurring into the low-growing *Tanacetum densum* subsp. *amani* (**3**). Both produce negatively allelopathic chemicals suppressing weeds and make a low-maintenance combination. Colour comes from the senescing flowerheads of *Euphorbia rigida* (**4**) and the purple verticals of *Salvia interrupta* x *S. candelabrum* (**5**).

Below Olive trees and Italian cypresses act as anchor points, while in the foreground smaller shrubs, such as the evergreen *Myrsine africana* (**1**), provide structure and textural contrast for the playful planting behind. Among the rounded mounds the pincushion blooms of *Lomelosia minoana* (**2**) complement the wiry flower stems and papery seedheads of *Centaurea bella* (**3**). *Lomelosia* (previously *Scabiosa*) is a tough, allelopathic plant, providing blooms through the heat of summer from March to July.



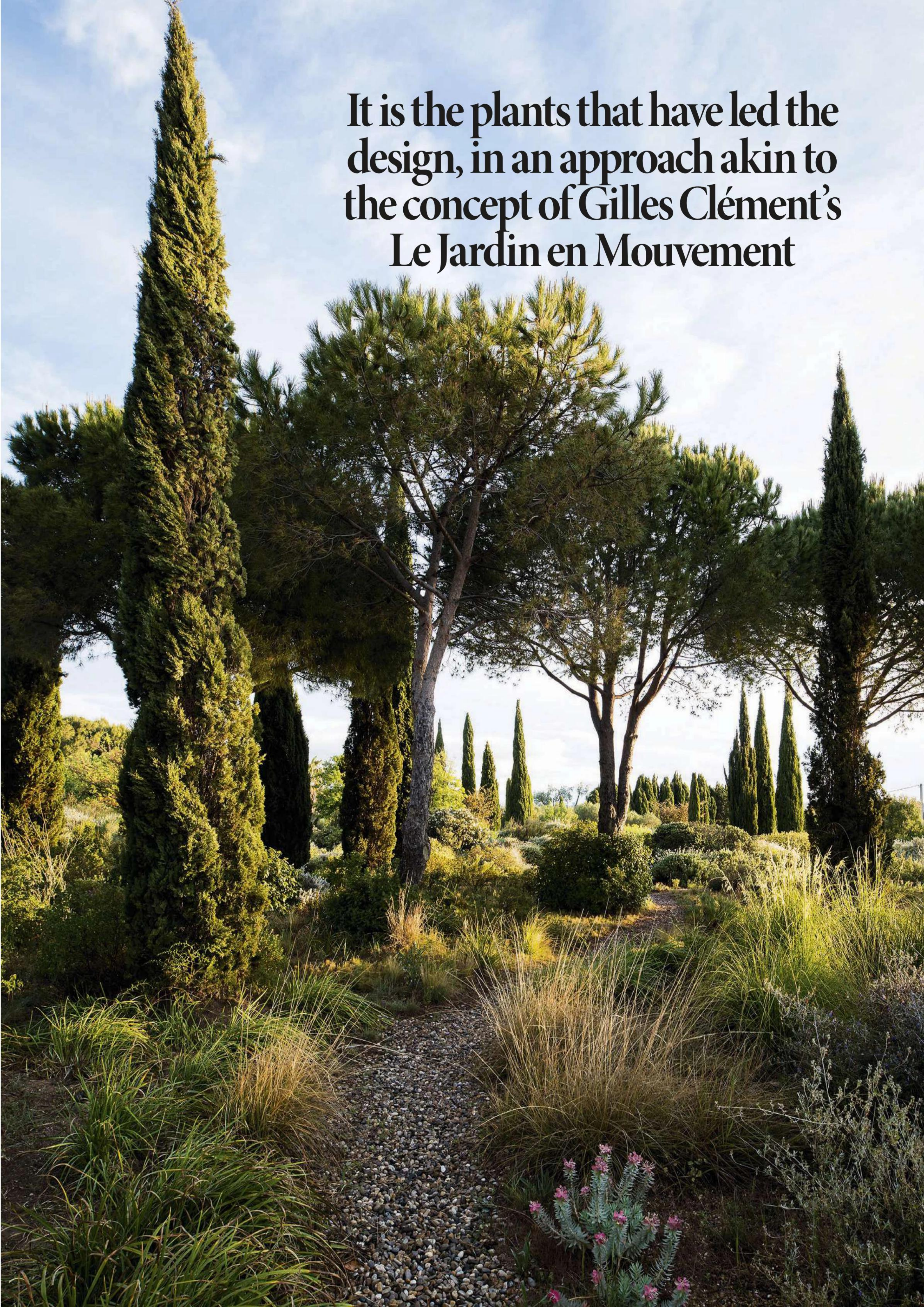
▷ palette. Olivier explains that such a garden should be designed in black and white. At Le Jardin Sec it is the structure and texture of plants, and the olfactory sensation of their volatile oils that are key.

When the Filippis began they were against the mainstream of Mediterranean gardeners who clung to a northern European idea of summer flowering gardens bedecked with verdant lawns. It is with a wry smile that Olivier suggests that the main reason for plants dying in Mediterranean gardens is not the lack of rain or extreme heat but rather gardeners' insistence on installing irrigation. He insists this does little more than create the perfect conditions for *Phytophthora* and other fungal diseases to which many native species are highly vulnerable. For the past 30 years this pioneering pair have encouraged gardeners and designers to abandon wasteful irrigation, harmful pesticides and to "walk the desert" of ecologically sensitive, native planting. However, they insist they are not on an environmentalist mission but rather are just keen to share their knowledge and passion of Mediterranean flora. As climate change brings increasingly hotter and drier summers, so the Filippis' lessons are more relevant to us all. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address Pépinière Filippi, RD 613, 34140 Loupian, France. **Tel** +33 (0)4 67 43 88 69. **Web** jardin-sec.com

This image Being located so close to the sea front means the garden is buffeted by burning salt-laden winds that really test the resilience of many species but the reflective quality of the lagoon provides another dimension in the play of sunlight in the garden particularly as it casts across the water at sunset and sunrise.

Facing page Winding paths lead away from the main garden through sparse groves of cypresses and the generous forms of stone pines. These trees provide some slight respite from the salt winds but they are also strongly evocative of the Mediterranean, which is captured in every fibre of this garden.



It is the plants that have led the design, in an approach akin to the concept of Gilles Clément's Le Jardin en Mouvement

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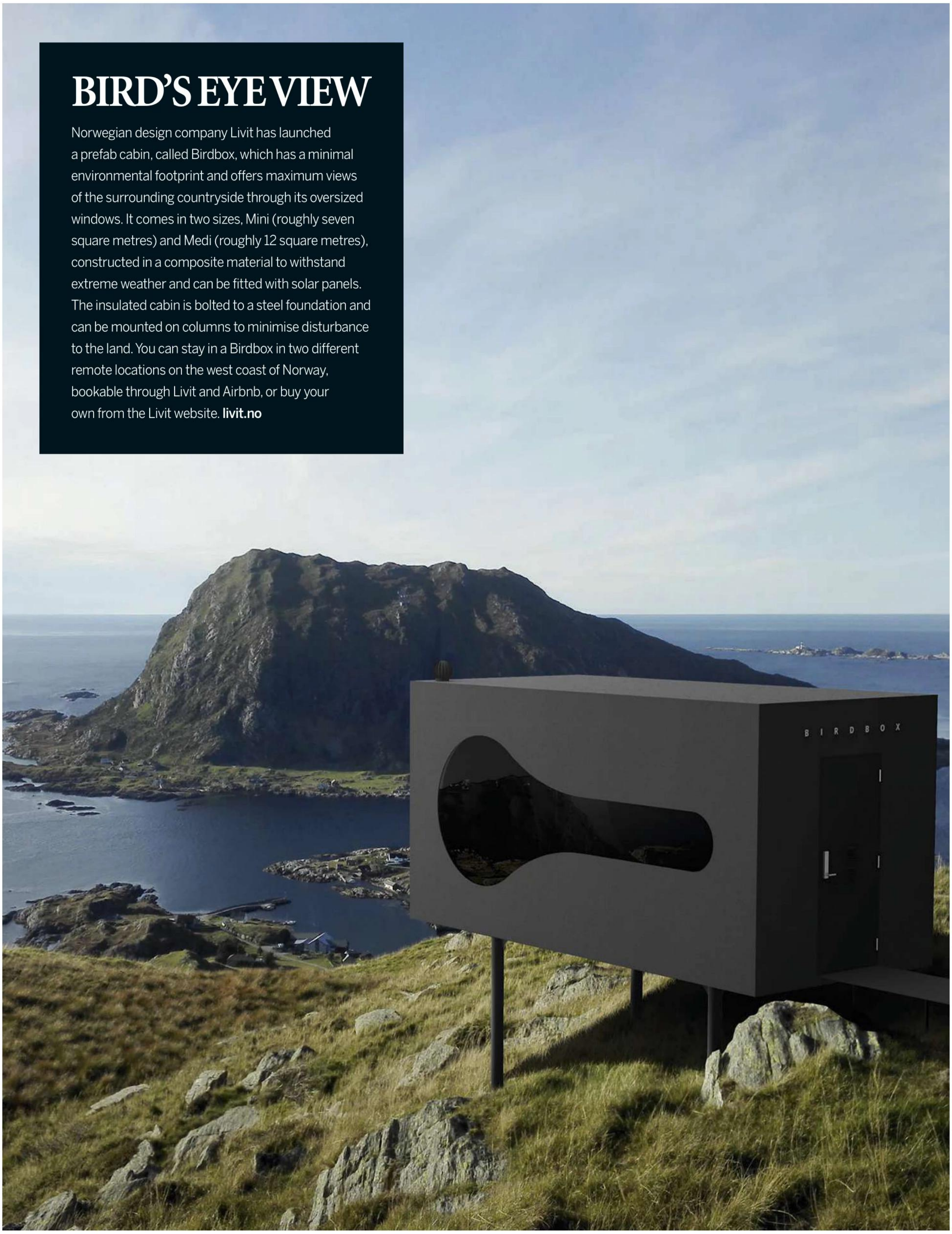
Design

News, ideas and sourcebook

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Norwegian design company Livit has launched a prefab cabin, called Birdbox, which has a minimal environmental footprint and offers maximum views of the surrounding countryside through its oversized windows. It comes in two sizes, Mini (roughly seven square metres) and Medi (roughly 12 square metres), constructed in a composite material to withstand extreme weather and can be fitted with solar panels. The insulated cabin is bolted to a steel foundation and can be mounted on columns to minimise disturbance to the land. You can stay in a Birdbox in two different remote locations on the west coast of Norway, bookable through Livit and Airbnb, or buy your own from the Livit website. **livit.no**



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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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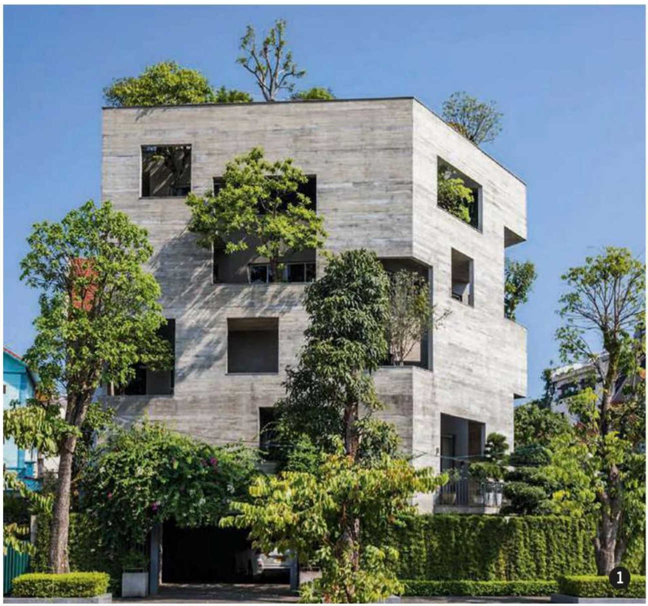
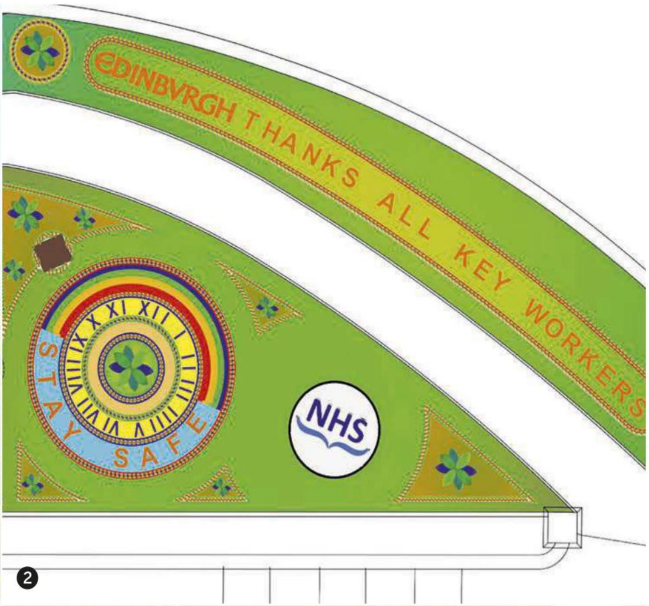
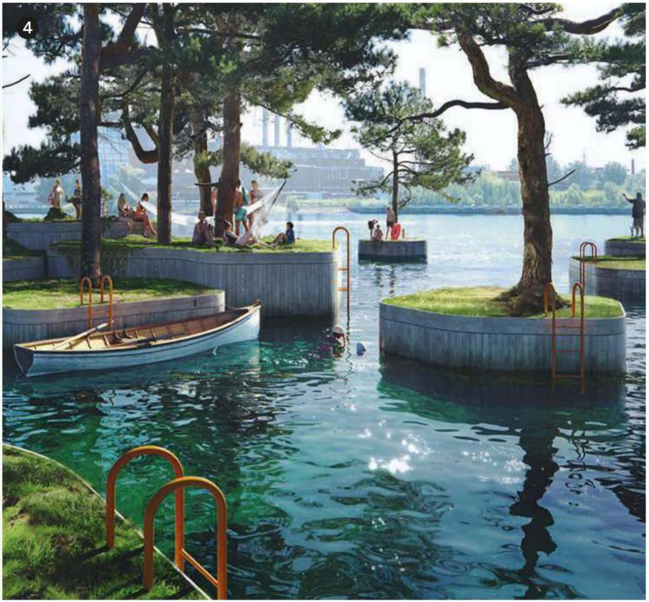
News

COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI







① VIETNAMESE VERTICAL GREENING

Vertical greening has been given a new twist in Vo Trong Nghia Architects' design for a six-storey house in Vietnam that has trees sprouting from the concrete façade of the building. An external staircase, which spirals around the perimeter, has large openings at various levels that support planting boxes large enough for a single tree, which can grow out through each opening as it matures. This outer stairway also helps to cool the building and provides a buffer against street noise. The fifth floor supports a garden where residents can grow their own vegetables. **votrongnghia.com**

② FLORAL CLOCK

Edinburgh's floral clock – the oldest in the world – will this year pay tribute to the work of NHS and other key workers during the coronavirus pandemic. Housed in the plinth of the Allan Ramsay Monument in West Princes Street Gardens, the clock celebrates a different event or anniversary each year and is designed to be in bloom until October. This year's colourful design by Edinburgh Council's parks department will be planted up by a team of three gardeners with 35,000 plants from more than 20 different plant types, including echeverias, sedums, saxifrages and *Pyrethrum*. **edinburgh.gov.uk**

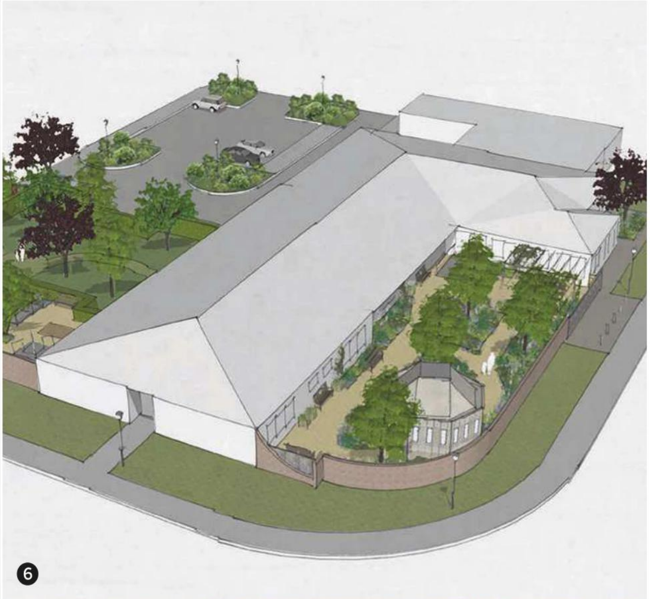
③ HORATIO'S CARDIFF

Sarah Price's design for the new Horatio's Garden in Cardiff has been finalised. The gardens for the Welsh National Spinal Centre, which is being relocated to a purpose-built centre at University Hospital Llandough, will wrap round the building in a series of small spaces that relate to the Welsh landscape and include a flower garden, a moss garden, a pocket forest garden, a fruit garden and a terrace garden that adjoins a garden room designed by architects 6a. The planting will feature clear-stemmed trees and shrubs that will allow views out to the surrounding landscape. **horatiosgarden.org.uk**

④ FLOATING GREEN

A series of floating platforms, made from steel, recycled flotation elements and FSC timber, is set to be built in Copenhagen's harbour. The islands will provide green spaces planted with trees, grasses and endemic species that can be reached by boat, kayak or swimming, and can be can moved around different parts of the harbour to create swimming areas and social spaces. The scheme by Australian architect Marshall Blecher and Danish design studio Fokstrot follows the successful trial of a prototype island launched in 2018 and it is hoped three more islands will be in place by the end of this year. **marshallblecher.com**; **fokstrot.dk**

⑤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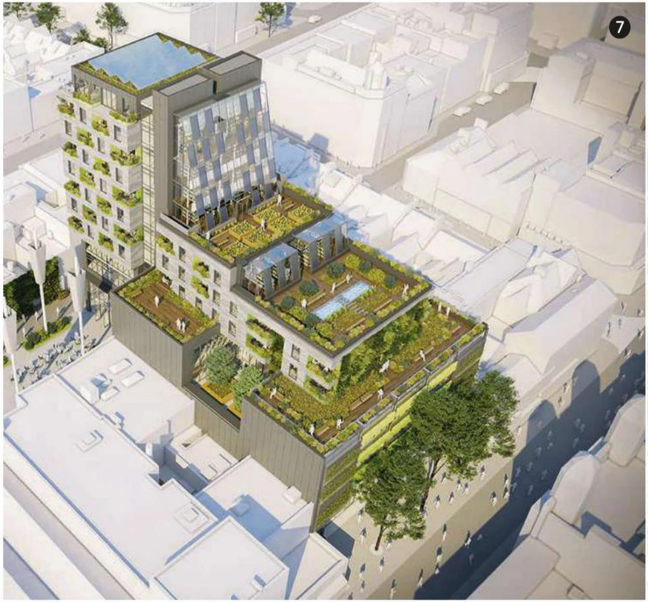
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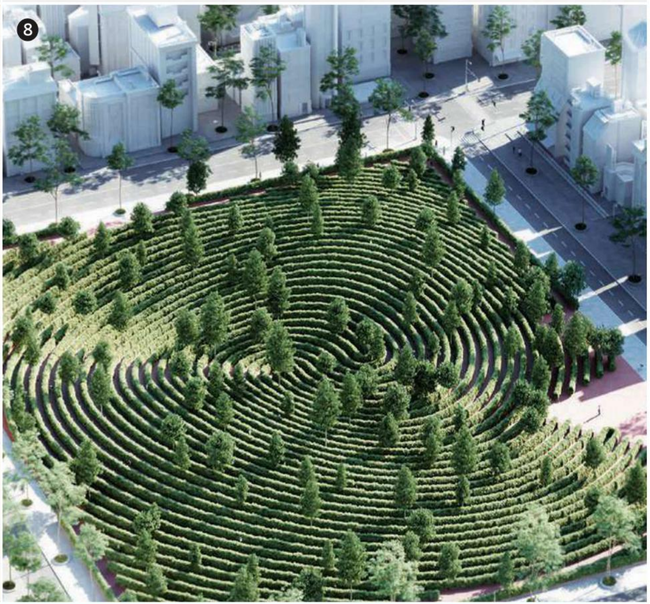
⑧

⑤ TRANSPARENT FLOWERS

Los Angeles-based artist Luna Ikuta has created a new way of looking at the beauty of flowers by stripping away the hue and chlorophyll and submerging the plant in water, where it moves with a ghostly transparency. The process allows the vascular networks within the petals and stems to be seen. So far, she has made two short YouTube videos for her series *Afterlife*, the first featuring the California poppy *Eschscholzia californica*, the second a collection of wildflowers commonly found in California, including *Salvia leucantha*, *Medicago polymorpha* and *Elymus californicus*. **lunaikuta.com**

⑥ HOSPITAL GARDEN ABERDEEN

James Alexander-Sinclair has designed a garden of two parts for the refurbished neuro rehabilitation ward at Woodend Hospital in Aberdeen. On one side of the unit is a garden for patients, family members and staff, with robust, colourful planting that provides year-round interest from bulbs and annuals in spring and summer, and bark and stems in winter. Wide paths, suitable for wheelchairs, lead to a circular Tea Turret designed by Swain Architecture. On the other side is an orchard, underplanted with grass, with space for outdoor physiotherapy. **fotnw.org**

⑦ SWANSEA PROJECT

A £4 million grant has been awarded to Biophilic Living Swansea, a mixed-use development by Powell Dobson Architects for Hacer Developments. Designed following the principles of biophilia, which aims to restore people's connection to the natural world while improving environmental and economic health, the redeveloped Woolworths Building, plus a new 12-storey tower will have rooftop glasshouses where residents can grow vegetables and other plants, using aquaponics. This urban farm will also be used as a research centre by Swansea University. A new public square will be an all-weather event space. **biophilicliving.co.uk**

⑧ STUDIO PRECHT

French baroque gardens with their arrangements of clipped hedges are the inspiration for a proposed new social distancing park in Vienna. Austrian design practice Studio Precht's design for Parc de la Distance consists of a maze-like configuration of 600m-long paths separated by 90cm-wide clipped hedges where people can walk and exercise at a safe physical distance. The routes lead from the outer edge of the park to fountains at the centre. The park is proposed for a vacant plot, and could be used after restrictions are lifted as a space where people can enjoy some contemplative time alone. **precht.at**

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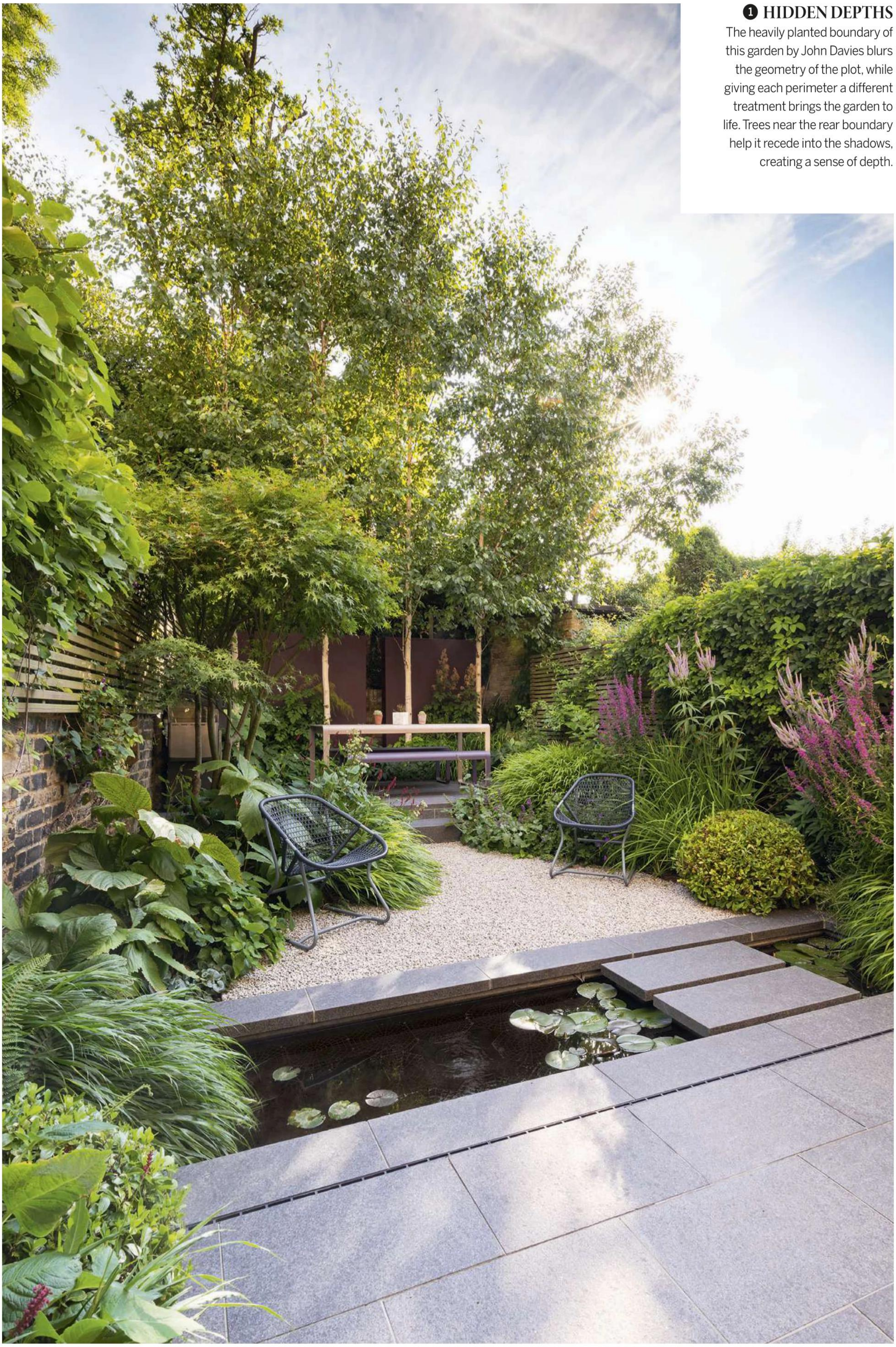


❶ HIDDEN DEPTHS
The heavily planted boundary of this garden by John Davies blurs the geometry of the plot, while giving each perimeter a different treatment brings the garden to life. Trees near the rear boundary help it recede into the shadows, creating a sense of depth.

RICHARD BLOOM

Boundaries

Unless you own all you can see from your kitchen door, your garden will be defined by walls, fences or hedges, but how you choose to work with these can help transform the space

WORDS ANDY STURGEON

When you stand at the back of your house looking out, unless you own everything you can see then you will need to give some thought to what happens at the edges of your plot.

The size and location of a garden can significantly influence how you handle boundaries. In a small, town garden you probably need to celebrate them. They often make up a significant percentage of the total area available for you to work with and they can play a huge role in the end result, becoming a key feature rather than something to fade into the shadows.

If you give each boundary the same treatment it can emphasise the lack of space so it's better to have at least two different surfaces. Simple planting on the side walls and fences and then a more exciting approach to the rear boundary can be an easy solution to make a dramatic backdrop for the whole garden. Boundaries can be expensive so it is always worth trying to work with what you have. If the boundaries really aren't good and your budget is tight then you could cover them with climbing plants and spend your budget on something to place in front. There are some interesting laser-cut steel panels available now that are easy to install.

> Simple planting on the side walls and fences and then a more exciting approach to the rear boundary can be an easy solution to make a dramatic backdrop for the whole garden

Old tumbledown walls can be patched and painted to give them a new lease of life but you should consider the on-going maintenance. White-painted render will lighten a space (and undoubtedly looks incredible in hot climates) but in cooler wetter places it will need repainting on an annual basis to keep it looking good. Better to opt for something a little darker that won't weather so readily and to think of it as foil to promote the planting in front. Black is always good to show off the green of plants but you can, of course, experiment with colour. Darker colours tend to recede and make a space feel bigger.

Where privacy is an issue don't make the mistake of building ever higher to block out a neighbouring window. Often it's just a sense of privacy that's required so key windows and roof lines can be dealt with by strategically placed trees or shrubs.

Trellis and slatted panels can work a little like net curtains. If you are close to them then you can see through them and they give a sense of space and airiness yet from further away, they stop people from looking in. While a painted wall is abrupt and finite, seeing light through the trellis screen allows a small garden to breathe and gives it a sense of space. They are also good for security on top of a wall or fence as they collapse under the weight of a burglar. Thorny climbers make an even better intruder deterrent.

If noise is an issue then you will need space. To get any meaningful reduction in noise from roads, for example, you'll need a depth of around 10m of dense tree and shrub planting.

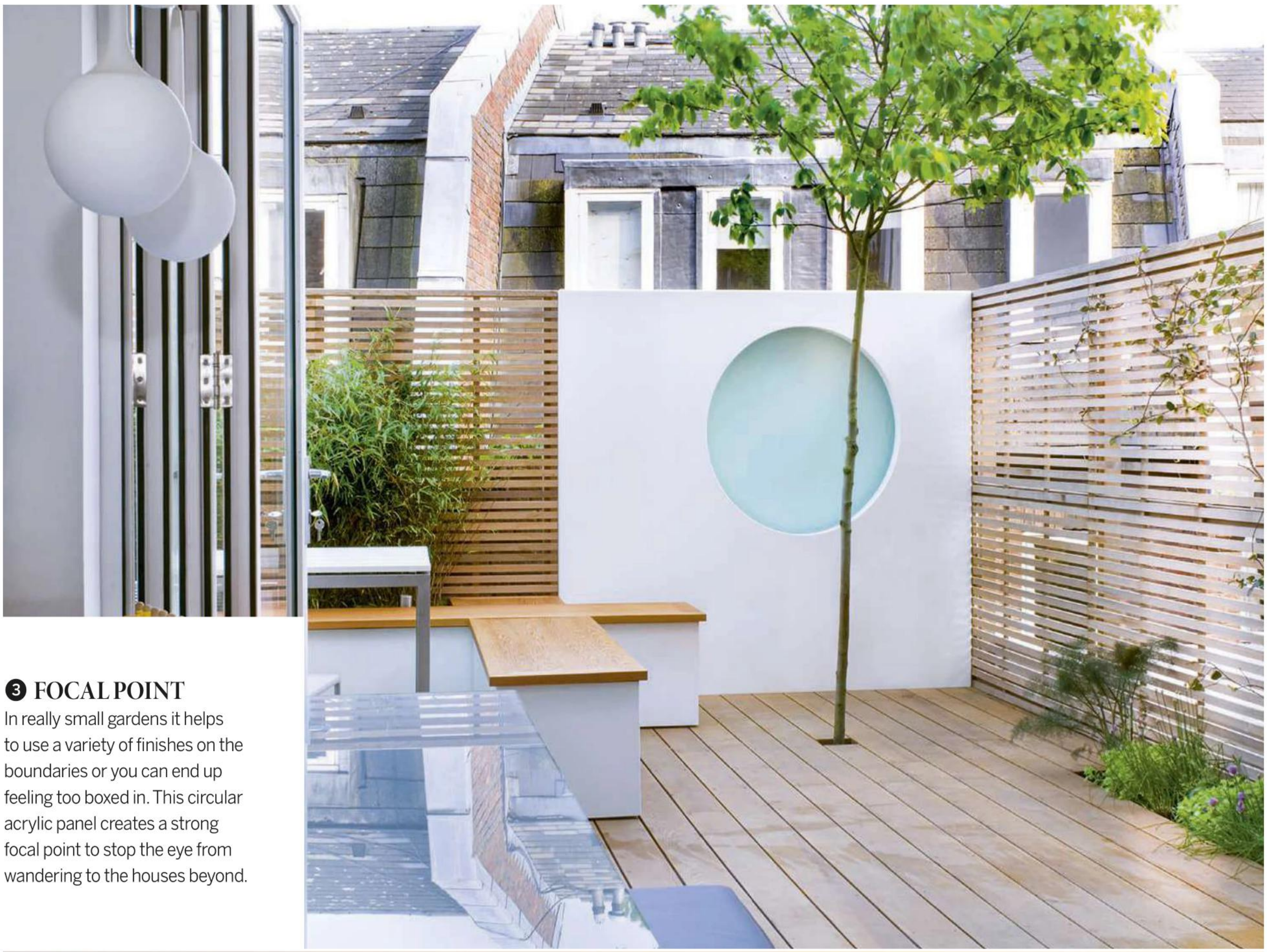
In a larger garden you may want the boundaries to disappear into the background altogether. The planting in front and within the garden can be used to overpower the geometry of your plot so you can start to forget that it is a rectangular box and the plants and trees within can begin to blend and blur with those beyond.

A rigid hedge around the perimeter will simply emphasise the shape of the garden. Think about a hedge put around a tennis court. It doesn't hide it, but announces that it's there. Shaping a boundary hedge can make a difference however. Try cutting it into an organic billowing cloud shape moving in and out and up and down. Other planting in front, particularly taller trees and shrubs to break the outline will make a hazy composition that draws the eye to anything except the boundary.

Not everyone has space for a ha-ha, the 18th-century sunken wall device that removes the visible boundary altogether by sinking it in the ground. But you don't necessarily need ownership of the countryside beyond your garden and I've used this successfully where gardens adjoin neighbouring fields. You can get a similar result by putting a fence in the bottom of a ditch but if you have a view of any kind, even an urban area, leading the eye around the garden and then off to the borrowed view beyond draws attention away from the boundaries. If you are trying to keep animals in then the most invisible method is a simple black chain-link fence set within planting. If you use a hedge then ideally plant a double staggered row with plants on either side and it will soon disappear. □

Andy Sturgeon is an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer. He is the winner of eight Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, including Best in Show in 2019. **andysturgeon.com**

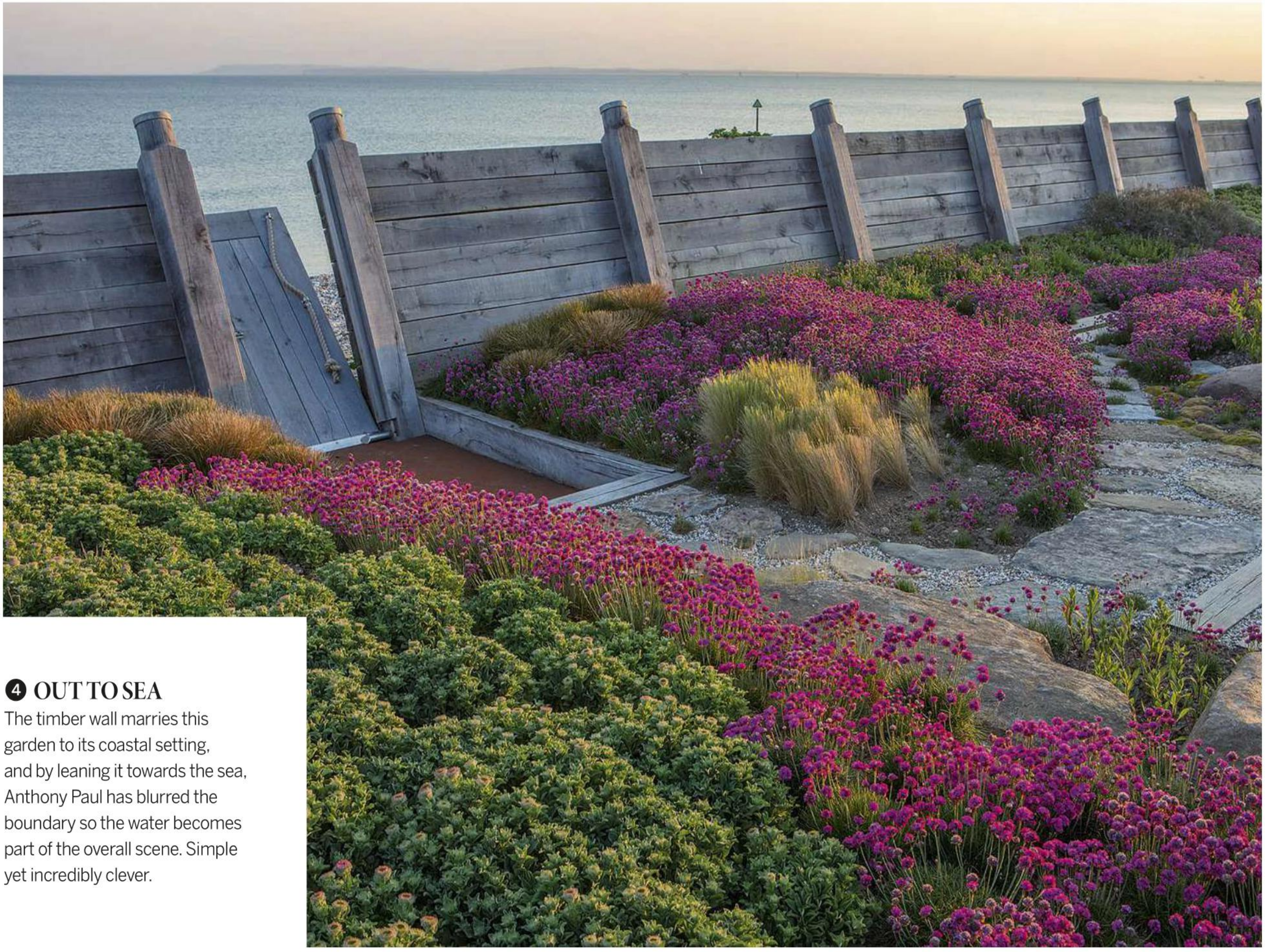
Turn the page for more ideas on boundaries



HELEN FICKLING

❸ FOCAL POINT

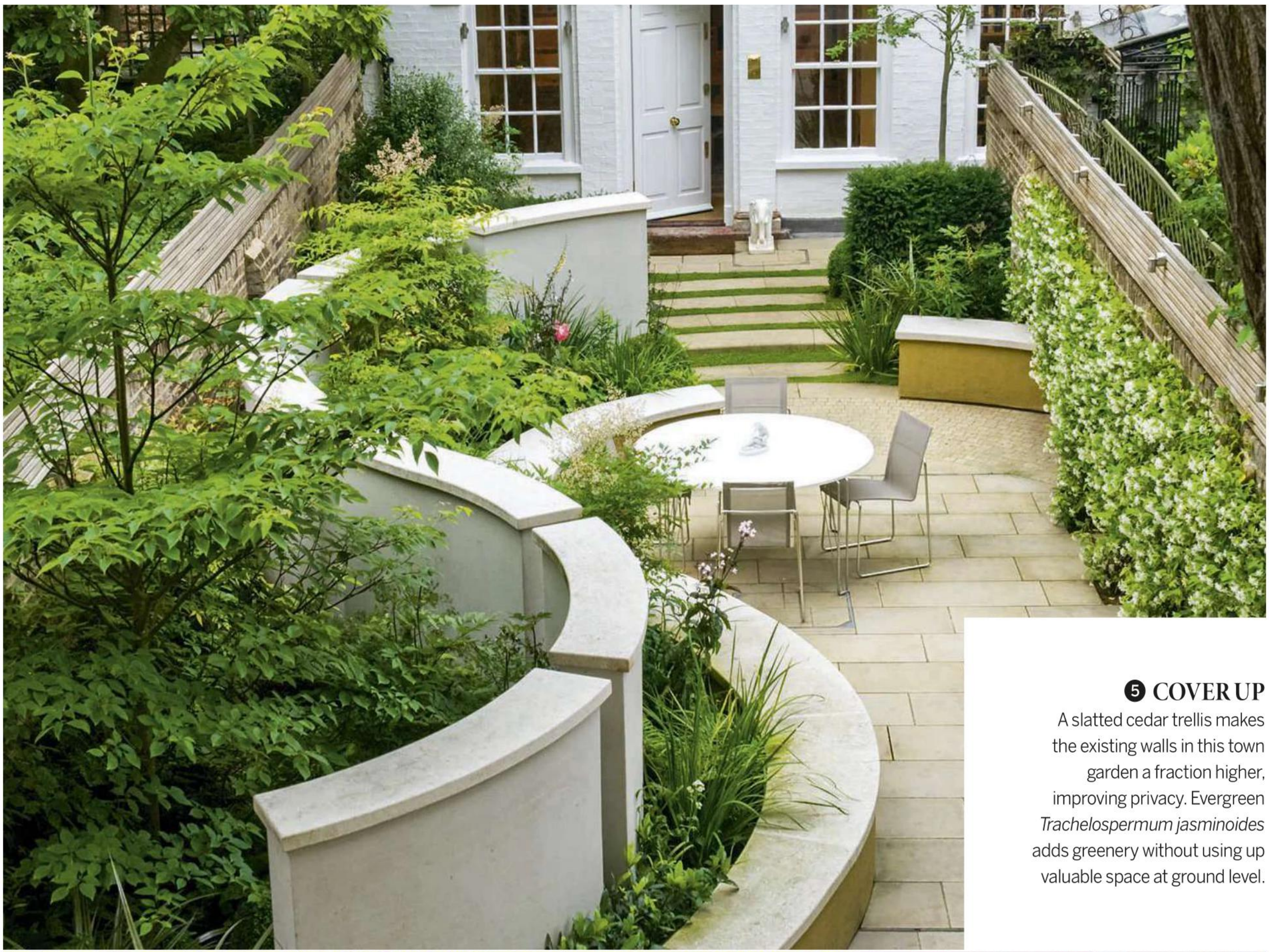
In really small gardens it helps to use a variety of finishes on the boundaries or you can end up feeling too boxed in. This circular acrylic panel creates a strong focal point to stop the eye from wandering to the houses beyond.



CLIVE NICHOLS

❹ OUT TO SEA

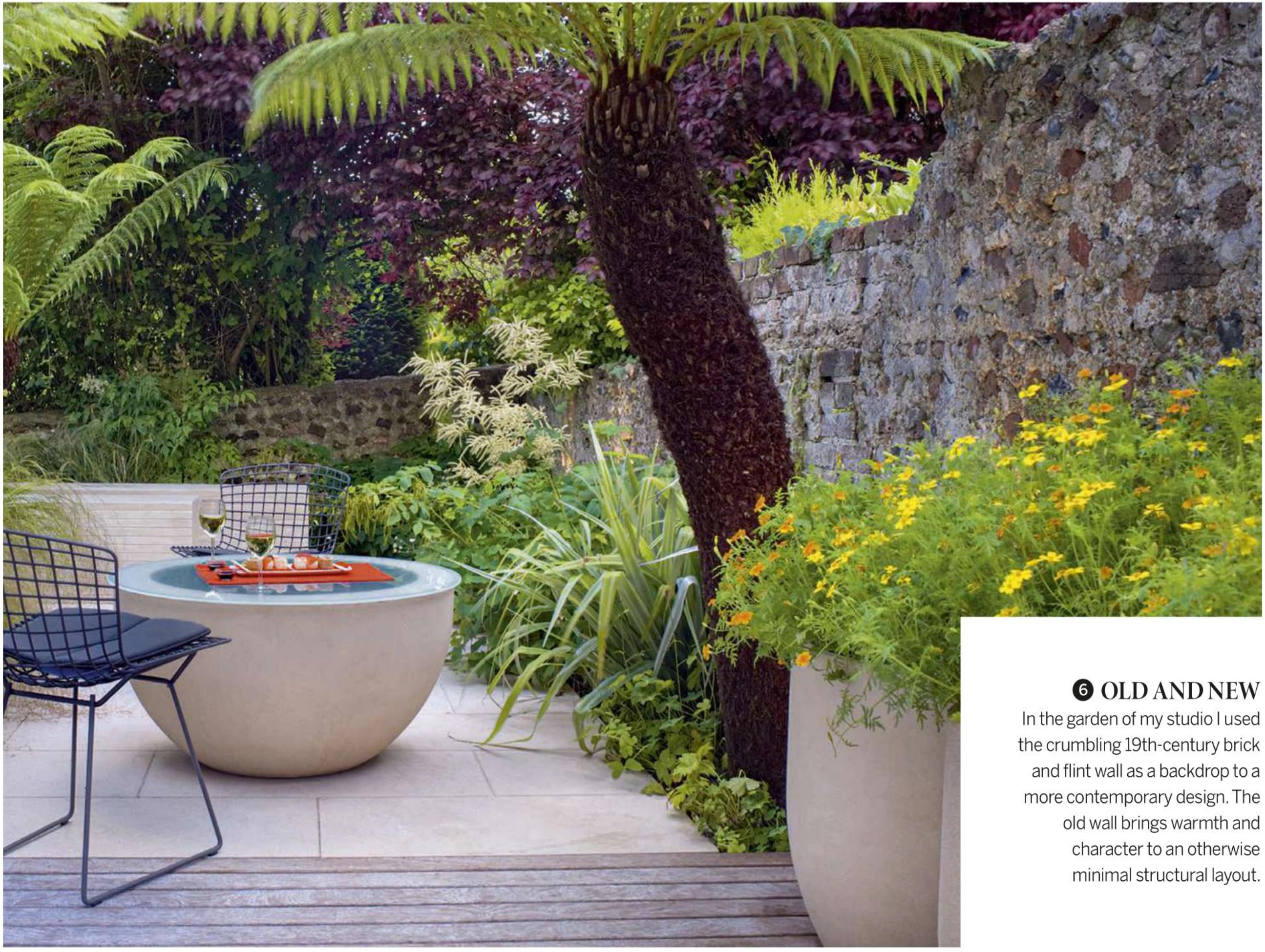
The timber wall marries this garden to its coastal setting, and by leaning it towards the sea, Anthony Paul has blurred the boundary so the water becomes part of the overall scene. Simple yet incredibly clever.



MARCUS HARPUR / GAP PHOTOS / ANDY STURGEON DESIGN

❺ COVER UP

A slatted cedar trellis makes the existing walls in this town garden a fraction higher, improving privacy. Evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides* adds greenery without using up valuable space at ground level.



HELEN FICKLING

❻ OLD AND NEW

In the garden of my studio I used the crumbling 19th-century brick and flint wall as a backdrop to a more contemporary design. The old wall brings warmth and character to an otherwise minimal structural layout.

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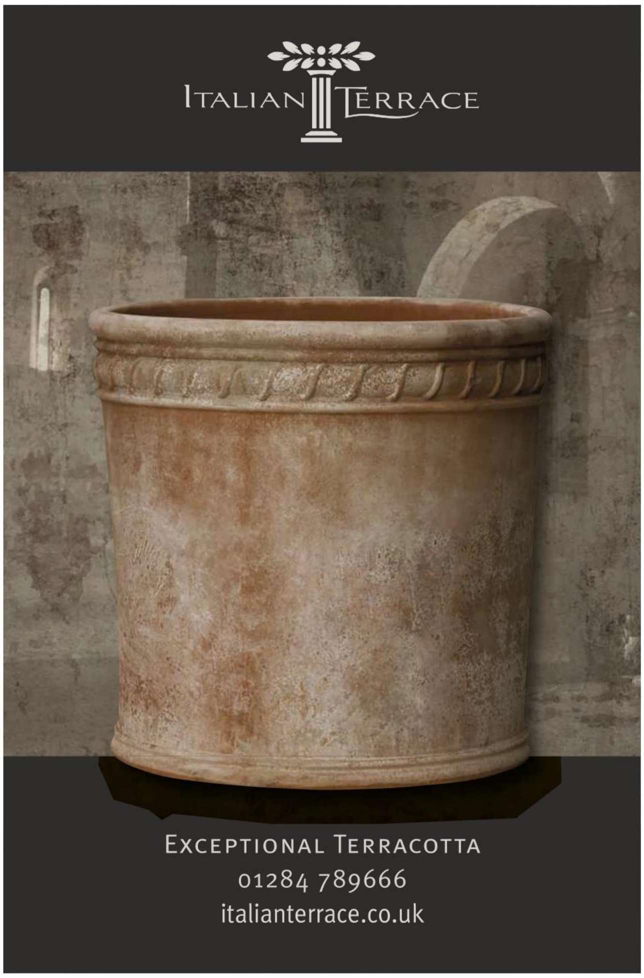

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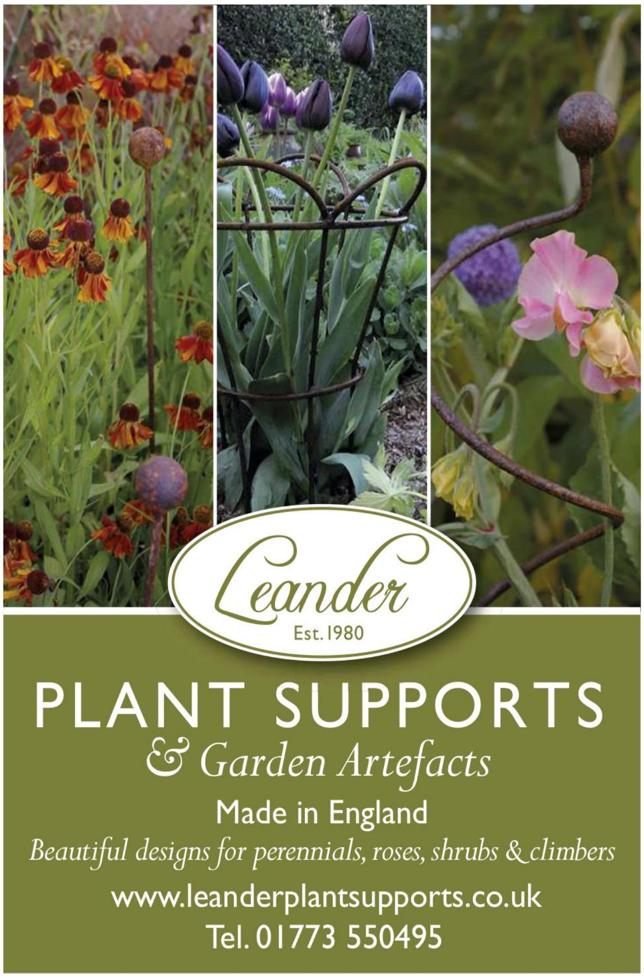

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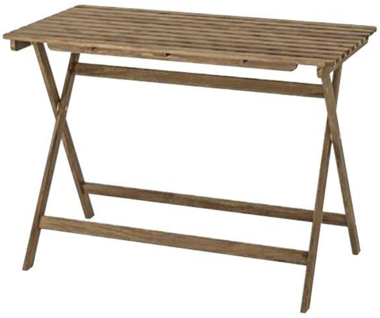
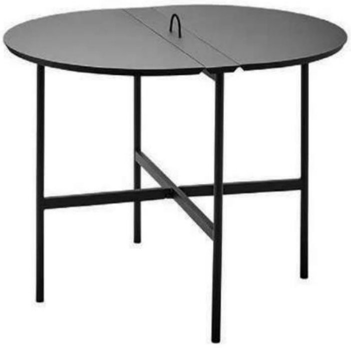
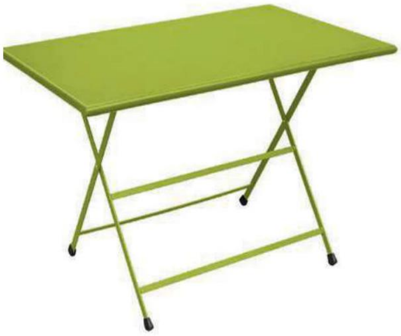


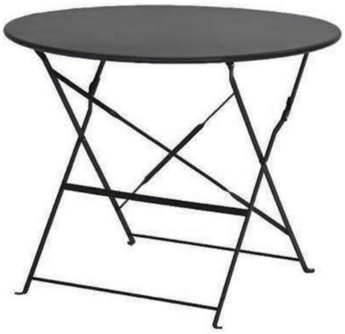
SLATTED
Askholmen Folding Table,
112x62cm, £40, IKEA,
020 3645 0000, ikea.com



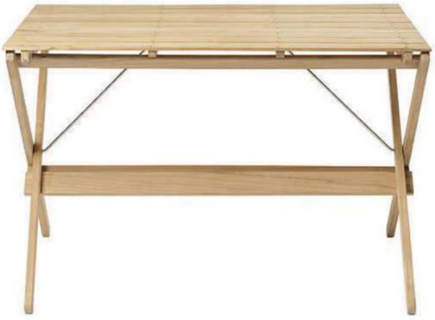
ONE SIDE OR TWO
Skagerak Picnic Table, in anthracite
105cm, £649, Connox,
020 3880 0027, connox.co.uk



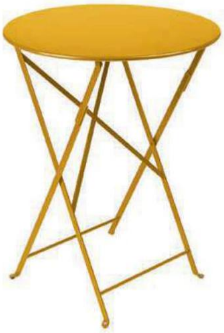
RIVIERA CHIC
Arc en Ciel Folding Table, in green
110x70cm, £215, Made In Design,
020 7692 4001, madeindesign.co.uk



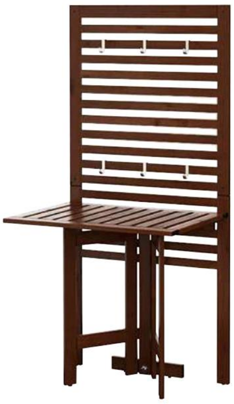
ROOM FOR FOUR
Rive Droite Bistro Table, large, in carbon
90x90cm, £150, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



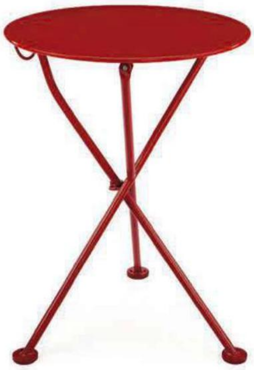
ORIGINAL 60S DESIGN
BM3670 Dining Table,
115x71.5cm, £632, Skandium,
020 3633 7626, skandium.com



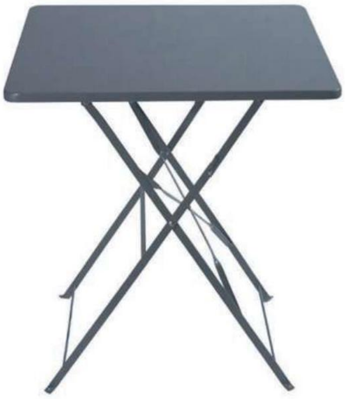
CAFÉ CULTURE
Fermob Bistro +, in honey
60x60cm, £159, Barbed,
020 8878 1994, barbed.co.uk



WITH WALL PANEL
Äpplarö,
80x62cm, £70, IKEA,
020 3645 0000, ikea.com



HANDLE TO GO
Steel Balcony Folding Table, in red,
60x60cm, £125, Manufactum,
0800 096 0937, manufactum.co.uk



ON TREND
Guinguette Metal Folding Garden Table, in grey,
70x70cm, £43.50, Maisons du Monde,
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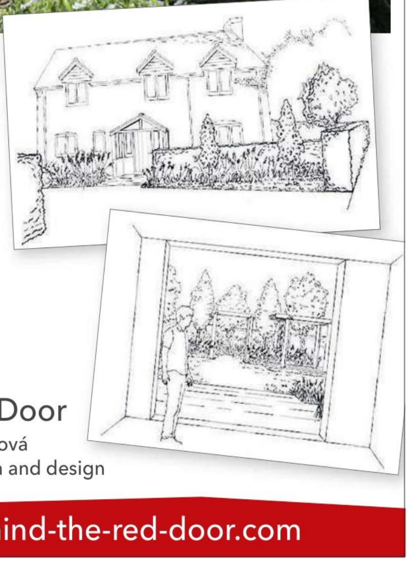

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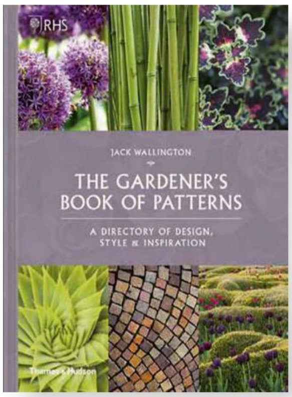
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, competition, crossword, back issues, reader offer

From strongly structured parterres to the informality of these borders at Lytes Cary Manor, shape and pattern in all their many forms are explored in Jack Wallington's *RHS The Gardener's Book of Patterns*, reviewed on page 102.

© JACK WALLINGTON

BOOK REVIEWS



RHS THE GARDENER'S BOOK OF PATTERNS: A DIRECTORY OF DESIGN, STYLE AND INSPIRATION

by Jack Wallington

Thames & Hudson, £19.95
ISBN 978-0500023273

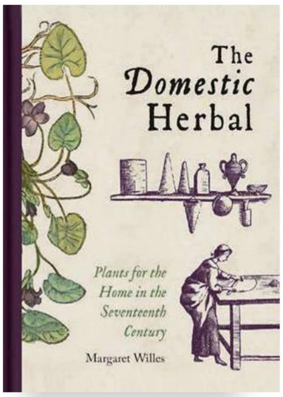
A insightful look into the world of patterns and how they touch and influence our gardens as well as almost everything else around us.

Reviewer Benjamin William Pope is head gardener at Trotton Place.

Glancing around it is not always obvious to spot a pattern, or indeed understand its significance. However, in his new book *The Gardener's Book of Patterns,* author Jack Wallington recalls that a pattern is often 'the skeleton that underpins everything' and so 'in understanding their logic, we can make better sense of the space around us'. With this in mind, Wallington's book will have you looking at your most familiar surroundings from a completely different perspective.

The book begins with the definition of what constitutes a pattern, exploring its interpretation and the various forms in which it can appear. Here Wallington artfully describes how natural evolution and human mathematics work to influence and create such visual masterpieces. The pages that follow take you on a rich journey that transcends history and location, nature and culture. Numerous examples of patterns are described within the text, ranging from the microscopic organisation of cells in a leaf to the much larger-scale street layout of our cities. Recollections of Egyptian gardens sit alongside minimalist modernism, while exploring the use of colour, texture, repetition and perspective. Throughout, Wallington sympathetically describes the relevance and effects that these patterns have on us as humans, going further to illustrate how we can incorporate them into our own personal spaces. The book contains many engaging images, which act as points of visual inspiration while successfully emphasising the content of the text.

The Gardener's Book of Patterns is a comprehensive study of its subject, touching on everything from plant detail and garden layout, through to the choice of outdoor furniture and furnishings. The result is an extensive collection of inspirational images and thoughtful words that will get you reaching for a pencil and paper to begin planning your next garden project.



THE DOMESTIC HERBAL: PLANTS FOR THE HOME IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by Margaret Willes

Bodleian Library, £25
ISBN 978-1851245130

Whether labourer's cottage or aristocratic mansion, the life of the 17th-century household depended absolutely on the garden.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.

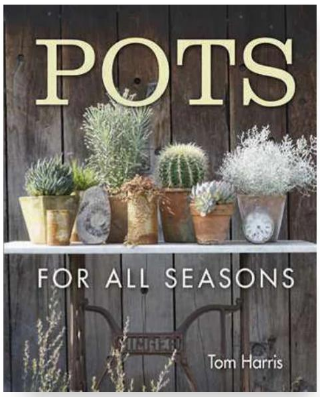
In tracing the importance of the garden to the 17th-century household, social historian Margaret Willis opens an intimate window on the domestic life of the period. Her sources range from the diaries of John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys and the herbals of Gerard and Culpeper to parish records and farm accounts. Most fascinating are the manuscript books kept by women, compiled over decades and passed from mother to daughter, packed with household tips and recipes for everything from 'kissing comfits', to sweeten the breath, to optimistic prophylactics against the plague.

Women's work, Willes observes, was never-ending – growing herbs for the pot, providing safe and wholesome beverages at a time when water was lethal, keeping home, clothes and family clean and sweet-smelling (oddly, stale urine seems to have been a key ingredient) – and supplying rudimentary medical care.

One chapter, an alphabetical list of herbs, is underpowered and (surprisingly for Willes) not always accurate, but as soon as she returns to her narrative, recounting the medicinal, cosmetic and domestic uses of plants, she is back on form, regaling us with hideous recipes involving eviscerated earthworms and ground-up snails, a cure for tinnitus (there is none today) and a novel way of treating headaches by stuffing pellitory up your nose.

Some detail is familiar – bluebells being used to stiffen ruffs. Much more is surprising. Fruit ciders are not a hipster invention: John Evelyn was a devotee. Houseleeks proved an effective remedy for gunpowder burns. Home-grown hemp was the poor man's substitute for window glass.

A pacy text is supported with lively and well-chosen illustrations, ranging from a hand-coloured 1597 edition of *Gerard's Herbal* to informative Dutch genre scenes (spot the fashionable artichokes among the feathered fowl) and delightful watercolours from the Tradescants' nursery catalogue.



POTS FOR ALL SEASONS
by Tom Harris

Pimpernel Press, £20
ISBN 978-1910258798

A useful introduction, packed with all the practical advice and inspiration you need to create stunning container plant displays.

Reviewer Jacky Mills is a professional gardener and artist.

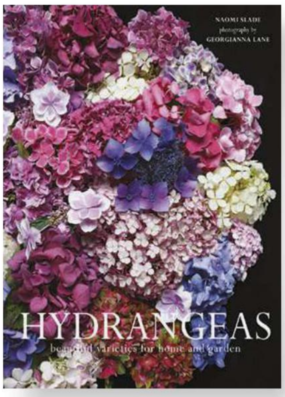
I have a penchant for gardening in containers since my first 'garden' comprised solely of a blank stretch of concrete, and I'm always looking for new, innovative ways to display favourite plants at home.

In this new book, Tom Harris extols the virtues of container gardening, sharing his knowledge and passion for the subject by showcasing a multitude of inspirational ways to combine and present plants. He quickly dispels any belief that 'stuffing plants in pots is unkind and impure' and encourages us to free our creative spirit in the absorbing world of pot culture.

While talking us through some basic design principles he describes how pots can instantly transform a space, provide focal points, add a finishing touch, evoke an atmosphere or create a particular mood. The opportunities they offer to experiment with texture, shape, colour, scale and proportion are limitless, producing harmonious compositions that can be moved, twisted, raised or regrouped to give instant gratification. Harris positively encourages artistic expression ranging from regimented formality to quirky eclecticism, to help make your garden space more personal and inviting.

An extensive photographic gallery showcases seasonal arrangements encompassing bulbs, foliage, berries, edibles and seedheads, as well as flowers. Chapters include advice on choosing the right container and choice of aggregate; organic pest control and cultivation requirements; helping you to understand the needs of your plants in order to keep them looking good all year. Plants in containers need a high level of aftercare if they are to thrive and Harris's key to success lies in unhurried preparation, quality components and diligent aftercare.

Most of all the emphasis throughout the book is on creative expression, and this contemporary look at container planting will encourage many to try something new and have some fun.



HYDRANGEAS: BEAUTIFUL VARIETIES FOR HOME AND GARDEN
by Naomi Slade

Pavilion Books, £25
ISBN 978-1911641230

A timely book, reappraising a shrub that is returning into fashion, lavishly illustrated and focusing on the best varieties to grow.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

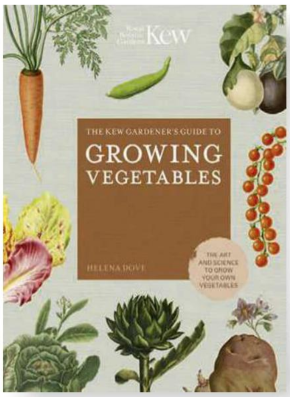
As Naomi Slade points out in the introduction to her book, hydrangeas are undergoing a reappraisal by both gardeners and florists. They were once seen as dull, old-fashioned shrubs, 'the flowers vast lumpen mops of dull pink and mauve that my grandfather called Queen Mother's Hats'. But the genus is now enjoying a renaissance thanks to nurseries like Ashwood and plant breeders such as Ryoji Irie, whose *Hydrangea* Miss Saori (= 'H20-2') rekindled interest when it was named RHS Chelsea Flower Show Plant of the Year in 2014.

Slade's book celebrates the versatility of hydrangeas as a houseplant, in bouquets, in containers and in the garden where they can range from beefy shrubs or companionable members of a mixed border to delicate, neat cultivars bred for patios and other small spaces. There are chapters on the history and cultural significance of hydrangeas and on how to cultivate and propagate them.

The core of the book is a catalogue of what Slade considers to be the best hydrangeas to grow, grouped into sections, such as Elegant and Airy and Brilliant and Bold. The plants featured range from species to recently bred hybrids that have been produced for specific growing conditions by enterprising plant breeders. The writing is zestful and the descriptions clear and informative. Above all, it is honest and based on her knowledge of the plants. We learn, for example, that as a cut flower *H. macrophylla* 'Wedding Gown' is 'excellent and elegant' but that *H. heteromalla* is 'not really the best'.

The book is sumptuously illustrated with photographs by Georgianna Lane, shot mainly on location at the major *Hydrangea* collections in Europe and America and with occasional exquisitely beautiful studio shots. Slade's descriptions and Lane's photographs certainly enthused me to want to grow more hydrangeas.

BOOK REVIEWS


Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
THE KEW GARDENER'S GUIDE TO
GROWING VEGETABLES
HELENA DOVE
THE ART AND SCIENCE TO GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES

THE KEW GARDENER'S GUIDE TO GROWING VEGETABLES: THE ART AND SCIENCE TO GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES

by Helena Dove

Frances Lincoln, £12.99
ISBN 978-0711242784

Proof that in what is becoming a crowded field there is still room for accessible growing advice underpinned by expertise.

Reviewer Hilary Brown is a freelance writer and allotmenteer.

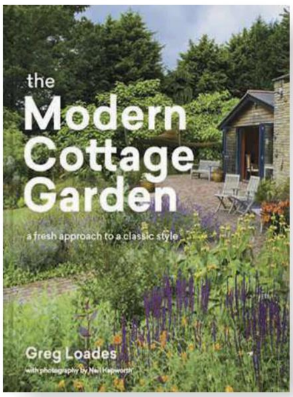
This new addition to the Kew Gardener's Guide series sees Kew's kitchen gardener share her considerable knowledge and passion for growing veg to great effect.

A comprehensive introduction covers everything from sowing to harvesting, and might be daunting but for the fact that it is straightforward and readable. And it's not just a case of repeating received wisdom – advice is backed up by explanation. There's a good reason for not repotting a seedling into a container much larger than its current pot, for example, as the extra growing medium will retain water and cause the roots to rot.

The book excels in the main section on individual crops. With generally a page per vegetable, each entry contains pull-outs highlighting notable cultivars, interesting facts (historically in Balkan countries, hairy bean leaves were strewn on the floor of infested homes to trap bedbugs) or useful tips (keep cauliflower heads white by covering them with their leaves while they are developing). The text is clear and concise, enhanced by illustrations from Kew's botanical collection and attractive plant label graphics containing pertinent information such as spacing, hardiness and edible parts. Dove also reveals an interest in unusual crops by including intriguing choices such as sea kale and oca alongside old favourites.

Peppered throughout are projects on a wide range of topics. Some, such as creating an asparagus bed, will appeal to seasoned growers. Others, such as growing windowsill salads, will interest those with limited space. In keeping with the zeitgeist, there's an emphasis on sustainability, with suggestions such as lining planting holes with comfrey leaves to negate the need for compost.

With the addition of a troubleshooting section and details of what to do when, this book will be an invaluable guide for aspiring growers and a trusted reference source for old hands.


the Modern Cottage Garden
a fresh approach to a classic style
Greg Loades
with photography by Neil Hepworth

THE MODERN COTTAGE GARDEN

by Greg Loades

Timber Press, £18.99
ISBN 978-1604699081

A practical and enthusiastic re-appraisal of an established approach to gardening, combining cottage garden and New Perennial styles.

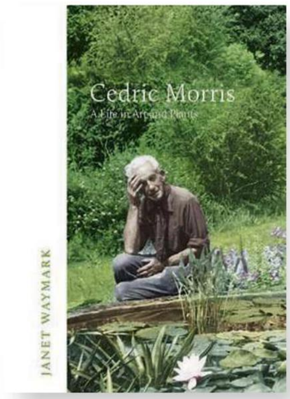
Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

What's known as the New Perennial Movement has lately achieved an indelible impact on how we view gardens. The style, while colourful in season, emphasises the importance of plant form in all its stages of growth, with a particular emphasis on herbaceous perennial plants. It derives integrity from its adherence to 'natural' plant forms, eschewing any overtly hybridised cultivars with disproportionately large or 'double' flowers. Perhaps most importantly it has achieved a huge shift of emphasis in seasonality, with autumn and winter both much more important seasons than spring, and the admiration of dead and decaying plants now a firmly established part of the orthodoxy.

While this style, being comparatively low maintenance and low impact, answers well to the problems of large-scale landscapes, what of the domestic gardener, anxious to squeeze as much colour and joy as possible from a small plot? What of spontaneity and experimentation, or the gardener who wishes to indulge their passion in roses, for instance? The enduring strength of the cottage gardening style is its eclecticism and fluidity. Author Greg Loades celebrates these aspects of the classic English gardening style without turning his back on the modernising influence of Piet Oudolf and his cohort.

In *The Modern Cottage Garden*, Loades advocates incorporating elements of modern planting style into the traditional cottage garden idiom, including some of its key plants and an appreciation of plant structure that persists into the winter.

Loades writes in a lively and enthusiastic style, using many a fetching simile to illustrate a point. This is a practical book, well-founded in personal experience, and will empower its readers to indulge their passions and experiment, no matter how limited a space they have at their disposal.



CEDRIC MORRIS: A LIFE IN ART AND PLANTS

by Janet Waymark

Whitefox Publishing, £25
ISBN 978-1912892204

A thoroughly researched and beautifully illustrated biography of the painter and plantsman Cedric Morris.

Reviewer Lucy Bellamy is editor of Gardens Illustrated.

Cedric Morris was a painter and plantsman whose legacy is a thrilling use of colour and 42 exquisite iris cultivars. With Arthur Lett-Haines, his life partner of 60 years, Morris established the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing in Suffolk in 1937, that counted a young Lucian Freud, Maggi Hambling and Frank Dobson among its students. Today Morris's iris selections are highly sought after.

Cedric Morris: A Life in Art and Plants is the most recent in a slew of books on Morris and his work. It's a thoroughly researched, inspiring and unflinching book. Waymark, a garden historian and lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London, delineates Morris in terms of his family roots in South Wales, his travels throughout Europe and his eventual home Benton End in Suffolk, where an atmosphere of 'enthusiasm and enjoyment' was considered 'essential to good work'.

Lett-Haines – known as 'Lett' – is described as 'practical, a good organiser and noisy', compare this to Morris who was 'quiet and reserved' and 'prone to violent outbursts'. It feels genuinely insightful. There are also mouth-watering details of iris parties attended by Vita Sackville-West, and visits by Beth Chatto.

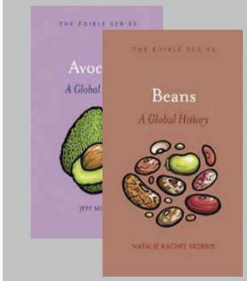
Detailed biographies of Freud, Hambling and others in terms of their personal relationships with Morris are fascinating to identify those for whom the Morris irises are named: *I.*'Benton Nigel' for his planthunting companion Nigel Scott, and 'Benton Menace' for his dog.

Beautifully illustrated and designed, the book includes paintings, maps, sketches and commercial work as well as a self-portrait and portrait of Lett early in their relationship, each a full page and on facing pages. Brilliant.

Notable too is the appendix that lists over 700 plants catalogued at Benton End in 1964. But if you're looking to acquire any of these plants, be aware that many of these have since been renamed.

Other books

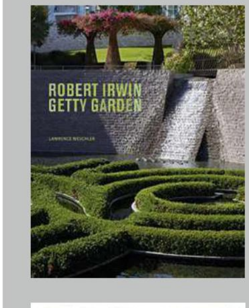
From the histories of two favourite foods to feeding the soul through nature, there is plenty of food for thought this month.



AVOCADO/BEANS

by Jeff Miller/Natalie Rachel Morris
Reaktion Books, £11.99
ISBN 978-1789142037/
9781789142044

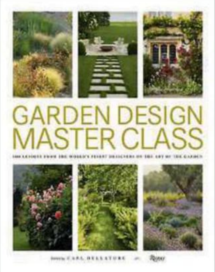
Two new titles from Reaktion's excellent Edibles series, exploring the foods' histories through anecdotes and delicious recipes.



ROBERT IRWIN GETTY GARDEN

by Lawrence Weschler
Getty Trust Publications, £16.99
ISBN 978-1606066560

Revised edition of this lively series of discussions between author Weschler and artist Robert Irwin, on his design for the Central Garden at Los Angeles' Getty Center.



GARDEN DESIGN MASTER CLASS

edited by Carl Dellatore
Rizzoli, £45
ISBN 978-0847866663

One hundred essays by some of the top garden designers working today, paired with sumptuous photography of each designer's work.

Héctor García
and Francesc Miralles
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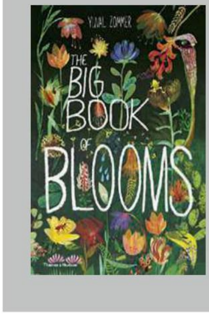
BATHING
The Rejuvenating Practice
of Shinrin Yoku
TUTTLE

FOREST BATHING

by Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles
Tuttle Publishing, £12.99
ISBN 978-4805316009

The history, science and philosophy behind the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku,* and being mindfully present in the natural world.



THE BIG BOOK OF BLOOMS

by Yuval Zommer
Thames & Hudson, £12.95
ISBN 978-0500651995

Illustrator Yuval Zommer introduces children to all kinds of colourful, carnivorous, and weird and wonderful flowering plants from around the world.

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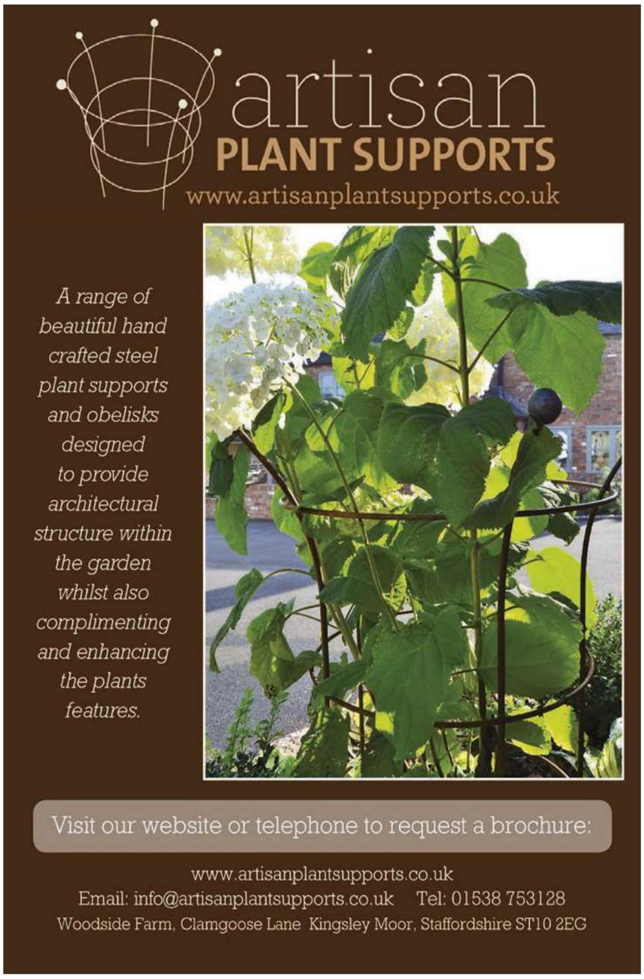

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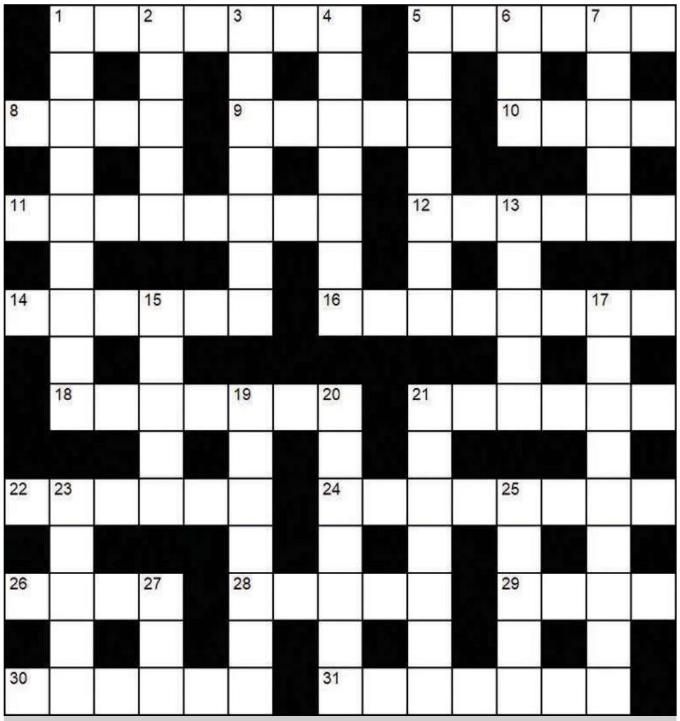
Crossword



ACROSS

1 Genus of shrubs with pea-like flowers – cut aloe out (7)
5 A petunia series, sometimes with dark-veined flowers – optical illusion (6)
8/10 Pernicious invasive plant from Japan, Kew noted sadly (8)
9 High-yielding, sweet carrot hybrid – gold bar! (5)
10 See 8 across
11 Forget-me-not genus (8)
12 A series of nicotiana plants – it has zero to six spots! (6)
14/24 Common name of *Galtonia candicans*… I confused with chrysanthemum (6,8)
16 Common name for a *Tillandsia*, which needs neither pot nor soil (3,5)
18 A cuphea with red tubular flowers – from a submarine? (7)
21 Pomegranate genus – rearranged in a cup (6)
22 A blue-leafed hosta with yellowy centre – Apostle (2,4)
24 See 14 across
26 A French couturier's double, early, rich-pink tulip (4)
28 A braid eg of dried onion bulbs for storing (5)
29 A year-round lamb's lettuce… hidden in celandines (4)
30 A conifer's leaf: it has an eye (6)
31 A heavy-cropping strawberry – ruined by a mallet! (7)

DOWN

1 Common name for plant in genus *Iberis* (9)
2 Genus of bird's-foot trefoil and type of aquatic lily (5)
3 An agapanthus with blue/white trumpet flowers – Tornado? (7)
4 A lilac-blue flowering aster (now *Symphyotrichum*); also a world-famous US golf course (7)
5 Bullfighter's fast-growing spinach! (7)
6 Argue… about a line of vegetables, say? (3)
7 Environmentally friendly grassy area (5)
13 A pink-flowering heuchera with silvery purple foliage – in Miami landscape (5)
15 A *Berberis thunbergii* with yellow foliage – as sung in *West Side Story* (5)
17 Tobacco plant genus (9)
19 A dark-blue clematis with recurved petals – possibly ceps? Lie! (7)
20 Large sweet, meaty tomato – "somewhat unorthodox," he articulated (7)
21 A *Hydrangea paniculata* with huge white panicles – 'Ghost'? (7)
23 What bindweed and morning glories do (5)
25/27 Fast-maturing delicious carrot – perfect revolutionary colour (5,3)

- **Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the July issue**

SOLUTIONS TO JUNE'S BUMPER CROSSWORD

Across: **1** Forget-me-not **7** Lacecap **11** Arboreal **13** Tartan **14** Opal **15** Trail **16** Stringless **17/12** Switch grass **19** Scalp **21** Rosarian **23** Fragaria **25** Toxic **26** Squash **27** Galaxy **29** Kylie **30** Parahebe **32** Sprouted **34** Pares **36** Bacopa **38** Delphinium **42** Shred **46** Kimono **47** Larch **48** Tayberry **49** Maestro **50** Hippeastrum.

Down: **1** Fire Power **2** Rootlet **3** Erect **4** Malva **5** Nigella **6** Traps **7** Laser **8** Cotinus **9** Coral **10** Praestans **18** Harry **19** Stalked **20** Pixie **21** Recipes **22** Rough **24** Guano **25/45** Tulip tree **26** Shrub **28** Asplenium **31** Bupleurum **33** Thin out **35** Rosehip **37** Cats ear **39** Prone **40** Igloo **41** Marsh **43** Ratte **44** Dryas.

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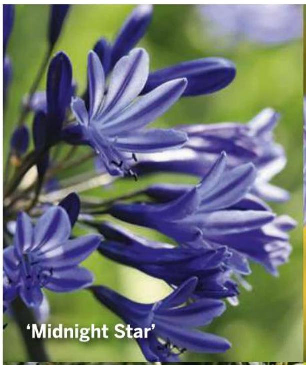
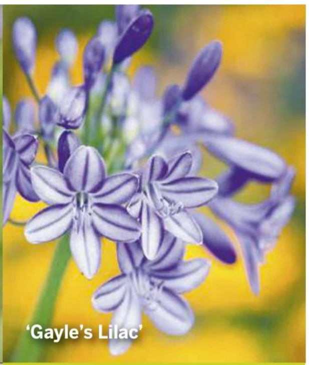
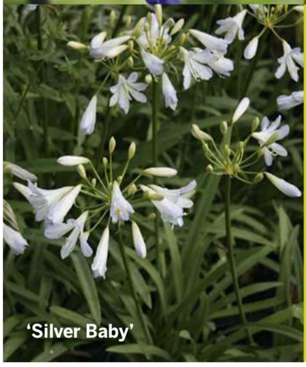

'Midnight Star'


'Gayle's Lilac'

RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS


'Silver Baby'

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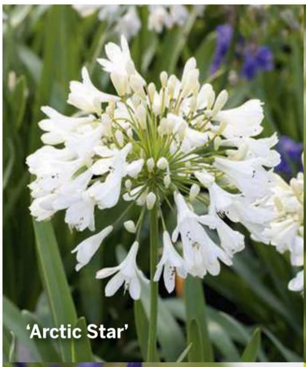
'Arctic Star'

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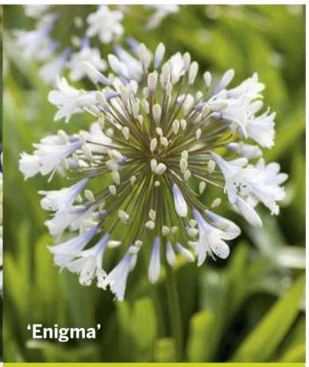
'Enigma'

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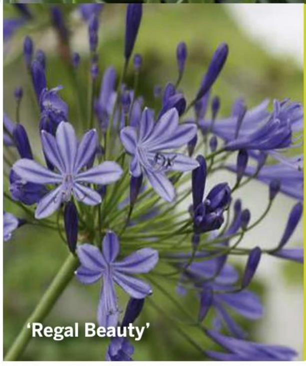
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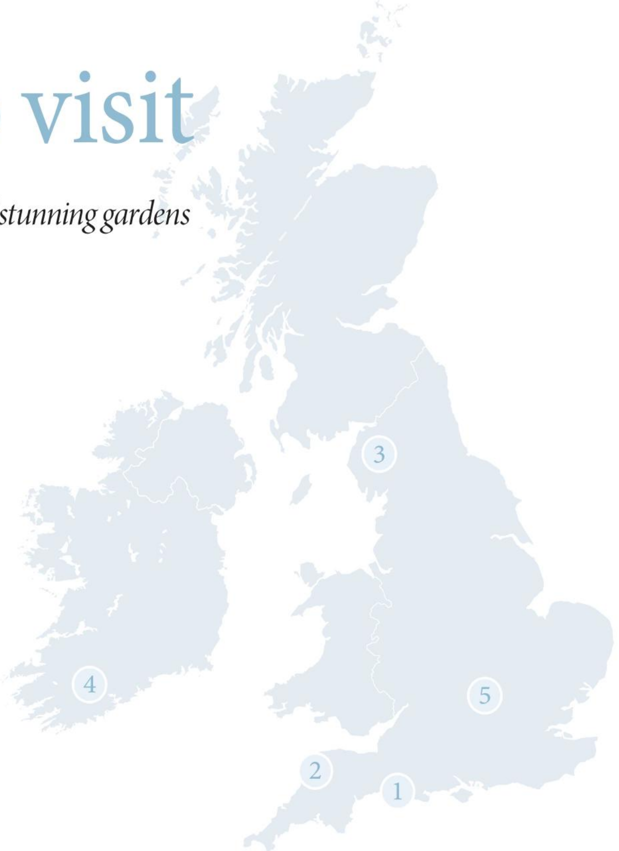

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HOUSEPLANTS

Sansevieria

An almost indestructible houseplant that is creeping out of the shadows to take centre stage

WORDS JANE PERRONE ILLUSTRATION PATRICK MORGAN

I begin this column fresh from the thankless task that is repotting a large sansevieria or snake plant. As soon as I hauled the inner plastic pot from its china cachepot, I knew there would be trouble: the beast had put on so much growth that the plastic was bulging alarmingly on one side. Sansevierias like to be a bit 'snug' in their pots, but I feared things had gone too far in this case, and my only option would be to cut the pot away from the rootball. After much huffing and puffing, though, I managed to prize off the plastic in one piece with a huge heave. And there was, literally, the root of the problem: compost was matted with orange roots, and a forest of pups pushed up from the rhizomes below.

Sansevierias are the Bear Grylls of the houseplant world, able to survive in the most unpromising of environments. They will live for decades as the dusty hatstands of the houseplant world: no one can quite remember how they got there or what to do with them, but can't bring themselves to dump the poor things. In her brilliantly eccentric book on the subject, *The Sansevieria Book,* Hermine Stover writes: 'Ever since sansevierias were discovered over 200 years ago, the horticultural world has been underwhelmed by them. Not a year goes by that anyone who is capable of writing a book about them doesn't.' Stover attributes the snake plant's ability to melt into the background to its toughness – and the fact growers have no idea how wonderful a carefully tended snake plant can look. She's right. Given the odd shaft of sunlight and a splash of water every couple of weeks from spring to autumn, a snake plant will reward you with a sculptural form and, at a schedule known only to itself, scented flowers.

Almost four decades on from the publication of Stover's book, Instagram has done these succulents a lot of good. Search for #SansevieriaSunday and you'll scroll through snake plants, from the squat bird's nest-shaped *Sansevieria trifasciata* (soon to be *Dracaena trifasciata* – taxonomists have recently moved *Sansevieria* to the genus *Dracaena*, but this news has yet to reach social media) cultivar 'Golden Hahnii' to the tall, elegant spears of *S. cylindrica* (*D. angolensis*). In the past it was hard to source anything other than the ubiquitous *S. trifasciata* and its gold-edged variety *laurentii* (*D. trifasciata* 'Laurentii'), but now, once-obscure cultivars are being propagated to satisfy the growing demand. I own several. My favourite is the variegated form of *S. metallica* (*D. zebra*), with its leaves striped in silver and cream, but my wish list is long, topped by the whale fin snake plant, *S. masoniana* (*D. masoniana*) usually sold as a single, preposterously wide leaf.

Snake plants are often recommended for low light conditions, which is unusual for a succulent native to Africa. Yes, it will survive in the half light under your hall table, but sansevierias will thrive in bright light with a few hours of sun, and will reproduce most rapidly when given plenty of summer heat. The only way to really kill this plant is to let rot set in, by leaving it in an unheated room and watering it often during winter months. So, don't let familiarity breed contempt for sansevierias, and keep them in pride of place in a sunny windowsill. You will be rewarded with bulging pots of the stuff.

Propagating sansevierias in water

If you're not the kind to buy cut flowers, why not enjoy a vase full of *Sansevieria* leaves instead? Cutting away a leaf of any species from the parent plant and allowing the cut to callus over for a couple of days before placing the cut end in a glass of water on a bright windowsill will, within weeks or months, produce a rooted cutting that can be grown on in gritty compost. One caveat: variegated types will revert back to their green ancestry, so to propagate these the best approach is to remove the plant's offsets, or pups, when repotting.□

Jane Perrone is a garden writer

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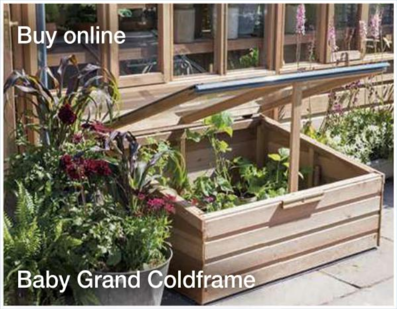
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